

No Peace Amongst The Stars

by HighValour

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Summary: Space was not as the idealists thought, no prosperity or enlightenment. Humanity has been at war, with itself and with alien races, since it first left the Sol System. The Innies, the Zealots and the turians failed to beat the UNSC and Shepard will be damned if he's gonna let some ship with a god complex succeed. Not on his watch.

1. Prologue Penal Squad - Pt1

Finally tweaked and worked on this idea enough that I'm making it a full fic, separate from Chaos In The Cosmos. Second chapter should be up by the end of the week and I may start a thread in my forum dedicated to serving as a Codex of sorts, outlining differences in technology between the Systems Alliance and the UNSC.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This story changes the date for the Human/Covenant War to 2479 to 2507 and ignores the events of Halo 4. The Forward Unto Dawn was never located! Other changes will be detailed as story progresses.

Another chapter, another attempt to entertain you all. I honestly do not have anything else to add, so on with the show!

Halo belongs to Microsoft Studios

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XX Colonial Capital; Shanxi, Shanxi-Theta Cluster - 2757 XX

"Dammit, where's our tech support?" Quentius Qui'in, a squad commander within the 43rd Marine Division, roared at his Communications Expert. The Turians had been fighting tooth and claw

for nearly six months, taking territory street by street and room by room.

This new race, Humans, were a contradictory race from what he'd seen. Their weapons were crude and basic, the mass accelerators overheating quickly and their barriers being a joke. Their military seemed pathetic to Qui'in, but their transport and communication technology was impressive enough. To say nothing of that trice damned AI.

"Command says engineers are on-route, we're to hold position and disable the defensive turrets." Lantar Oraka, Communications Expert and second-in-command, reported once he got off the radio. A quick beeping indicated that a transition was being sent and Lantar back away from the corner, around which several human built turrets began firing if anyone got to close, and took it. "Good news, Sir. Those Salarian programs worked. We've hacked into human communications and data transmissions."

"Took long enough! We've been here nearly six months and they've only just broke the encoding, what took so long?" Quentius spat as the turrets gave off another warning volley.

"It's that damn AI, it codes all messages and is so alien our VI programs can't deal with it." Lantar explained as one of the squad members got caught by turret fire, he hadn't ducked back behind cover fast enough, and was torn apart. "It's taken the programmers this long just to find a way to listen in without the AI finding out and bombarding us with false results."

Before either could continue the building above them trembled as something heavy impacted it. A quick check in with troops stationed outside the building led to the team making a tactical retreat as it appeared that Command had decided to launch a debris strike down on their location without warning. As they reached the building's main lobby the sounds of gunfire rang out. Readyng their weapons and rushing forward the Turians found their fellow soldiers dead and roughly three dozen humans in heavy grey armour waiting for them.

"By the Spirits." Quentius gulped as the wreckage of a Turian cruiser burned up in the atmosphere, its silhouette disenable in the sky above. Shuttles, human design, descended to drop off squad after squad or to strafe turian positions. Large metal pods, either orbital strikes or some kind of quick drop for supplies, raced across the skyline to crash down in groups of five or six.

"Take cover!" Lantar screamed as the humans opened fire. Their automatic weapons suffered from the same disadvantages as other human weapons, poor cooling and weak kinetic transfer, but the shielding was something else.

Rather than the traditional blue pulse, blue pulse failure the standard human soldier's shielding had shown these troops came equipped with some kind of alien energy shielding. The sand grain sized projectiles the turian rifles fired incinerated on contact with a yellowish burst of electrical energy. As the turian troops took cover back inside the building's lobby the humans advanced. Some moving from cover to cover up the front, to draw attention and fire, while the others either flanked to the sides or took up a defensive

position covering the rear in case of turian reinforcements.

As their weapons overheated the humans either discarded them for the weapons of fallen turians or swapped out for auxiliary ones carried on their person. Turian troops don't break, normally, but Quentius' troops were tired, they were shaken and they were facing troops of a much higher calibre than they had been faced before this. As the advancing troops gained more and more ground Quentius considered ordering a retreat back into the underground tunnel system, at least until the flanking enemies breeched in through the walls behind his position and opened fire into his men's exposed backs.

"Where's our support? How are these troops getting planet side?!" Quentius screamed. Lantar only to see his comms expert go down as over a dozen rounds pounded into his shields, punched through his armour and shredded his skull and brain.

XX Orbit Over Shanxi, Shanxi-Theta Cluster (Fifteen Minutes Before)
XX

The first sign the captain of the turian cruiser Honourable Duty had that something was wrong was when half of her analysts started frantically moving their talons over holographic displays and yelling at one another about things like 'high-wave spectrum radiation' and 'distortive anomalistic readings'. The second was when another of the techies began screaming that nearly a dozen unknown vessels had just appeared out of nowhere less than two thousand kilometres off their starboard bow. The final clue that things were well on their way to being FUBAR was their helmsman firing the thrusters to get them out of the way as these unknown ships opened fire.

"Enemy vessels on display now!" The captain ordered. The main holographic display, which normally showcased the ship itself, switched over to displaying the enemies. Unlike the long almost starfighter shaped turian vessels these enemy vessels resembled a series of hexagons that increased in size as one moved from the bow to the stern.

"Another anomaly detected, significantly larger!" A techie reported before replacing the dozen or so enemy vessels with a single image. A solid ring of energy, almost five hundred metres wide, that turned pitch black for a split second before a hulking kilometre and a half long monstrosity of a ship emerged.

"Is that a one of their Dreadnoughts?" Someone asked softly, no effort to hide the awe and fear in the speaker's voice. The voice expressed the hidden concerns amongst the crew, who or what could build that? There was no way the humans, whose Mass Effect technology was so primitive, could have constructed such a vessel and— And the way it had emerged from that void— Had the Hierarchy provoked war with some unknown advanced race by attacking humanity, some kind of client race?

"Energy build-up detected emanating from the enemy dreadnought!" Someone warned.

The Honourable Duty's helmsman tried to her the ship out of line with the enemy Dreadnought but when whatever the energy had been was discharged the ship shook violently, warning sirens screamed and the ship lost all manner of propulsion. Drifting dead in her captain

screamed for a status report.

"Shield strength down to twenty sev- Twenty fo- Shields down to under one/fifth power." Someone gasped.

"We've lost thrusters!" Another reported.

"I know thrusters are down, tell engineering to get them back online.!" The captain ordered.

"No! I mean they are gone! Completely destroyed!" The techie snapped back in panic. "Engineering as well!"

"We've got hull breeches on decks six through fifteen in their stern sectors. Sensors on decks one through five and sixteen through twenty are down as well." The captain had didn't even bother to register who said that, she just tried to process it. "Deck twenty one has partial sensors and is showing temperatures of. T-That can't be right"

"What!?" The captain demanded to know. She needed to know what had happened to her ship.

"Over twenty-seven hundred degrees, Ma'am." That reply did what four tours against Terminus slavers, two colonial insurrections and a violent husband had failed to do. It broke the captain.

"H-how? It was a glancing blow? How?" It was all she could ask, how? How could a race with weapons like that exist? How could the Hierarchy fight ships like that monstrosity? How?"

"Captain! Captain our orbit is decaying fast!" it was the helmsman. He was saying something but she wasn't paying attention. She was just watching the holographic displays, that showed more and more anomalies opening and more and more ships emerging.

Someone was ordering a general evacuation, saying they were a sitting target, but she wasn't listening. A talon gripped her forearm, it was her second in command and he was telling her to move.

"How? How? How, how, how, how?" The captain repeated, over and over, as she watched the screens and resisted his attempts to get her out. She didn't want to survive, she didn't want to survive if it meant facing a war against these unknown beings.

"Sorry Ma'am but we need to go NOW." Her second apologised before punching as hard as he could and knocking her out cold so he could get her to safety.

XX London; Earth, Sol System " 2772 XX

"John Shepard, you have been found of assault, aggravated assault, assault with a deadly weapon, assaulting a police officer, destruction of public property, unlawful behaviour, resisting arrest, unlawful assembly and membership of an illegal grouping." The judge announced as he looked down upon the youth before him.

One of nearly forty people arrested following last month's Block War. The dossier provided with the case included that he was suspected of

more than twenty weapons charges and shootings but there was insufficient evidence to charge him.

"According to your file you turned eighteen yesterday, congratulations." The Judge noted snidely. As such you are no longer in State Careâ€| Normally kids in leaving the foster system have to serve mandatory military service for eighteen months but it looks like you'll be spending the next few years in prisonâ€| Do you have anything to say?"

"I think some of my stitches reopened." John muttered. The bruises and cuts that covered his face made it painful to speak. "You wanna hurry the hell up?"

"Looking through your record, I see quite a list of achievements." The judge sighed as he brought up images from the rioting. "You took part in a Block War, putting a lot of people in hospital, and then you led nine police officers on a two hour chase. Put four of those officers in the hospital and even managed to take a seven year veteran hostageâ€| If the floor hadn't given way beneath you I don't think you'd be standing here today, do you?"

"No, what's your point?" John asked, glaring at the judge with his non-swollen eye. "And I hope the city gets a refund for Heavenly Haven, building code ain't up to scratch."

"You're looking at sixteen years, minimum, for this as you are unwilling to testify against other members of the Reds." The Judge explained as he replaced the images of Shepard during the Block War with several pictures of high ranking members of the Reds gang. "If you agree I could remove years from the sentence, last chance."

"I'm no snitch." John all but spat, he wouldn't turn. Reds had been good to him, he owed the gang. "So sentence me and get it done!"

"Sixteen years minimum, seems like a wasteâ€| Is it the violence or the sense of belonging that made you join up with the Reds?" The Judge asked as he banished the images and began to enter the sentence. Not bothering to wait for an answer he continued on. "In recognition of your capabilities, and the need for able bodied soldiers, I sentence you under the Task Force X Act 2743 to serve on the front lines in support of our Sangheili allies against Jiralhanae expansion. Your sentence is to be commuted to five years of service, time added or deducted based on deposition and action."

"Ha, a 'Suicide Squad'? Bring it on." John said in between harsh laughs. "I'll serve my five years and be back on the streets before you know it. I ain't afraid of a little violence."

"Spoken like a fool who's never seen real battle." The Judge snorted as he signalled to security to remove John from the court. "I wonder if that bravado will make it through basic training."

XX Unpronounceable Jiralhanae Controlled Planet (Nine Months later)
XX

Shepard's Penal Squad took cover as Kig-Yar snipers opened fire on their position. As rounds ripped through the rubble the squad had hidden behind, Shepard saw their CO take a hit to the

throat.

"Dammit, fucking Jackals." Spat Corporal McArthur. The man was the only actual UNSC marine left in the squad now that the Sergeant had kicked it. Rising from cover and opening fire, McArthur screamed insults at the Kig-Yar before two shots to the chest did him in.

"Fuck." Shepard muttered before crawling over to McArthur's corpse and taking one of his grenades. Watching for enemy fire, Shepard found where one of the snipers was hidden and tossed the grenade through the hole the Kig-Yar was firing from. Diving back behind cover and moving quickly to avoid shots from the other snipers, Shepard was rewarded when the grenade's bang was accompanied by a shriek of agony from the Kig-Yar. A moment later several more grenades detonated, taking out the rest of the snipers.

"Not bad kid." Called out Corporal Jones, most senior remaining member of the squad and now de-facto commander. Moving out into the open, Jones signalled for the others to move up. As Shepard followed, he stopped to pry a particle rifle from a Kig-Yar's hand. Turning to see what was keeping him, Jones nodded. "Good idea. Right boys, find their corpses and grab any weapons you think you can use."

As the squad moved down a deserted street Shepard was ordered to take point. Trying to watch every window at once, Shepard realised that their location was a perfect ambush site. Holstering his MA-ICWv4, Shepard activated the scope on the particle rifle and scanned further down the street. What he saw made his blood run cold. A dozen Jiralhanae making their way towards the squad, led by a chieftain wielding a massive hammer.

"Corporalâ€¦ We got incoming." Shepard gulped as he offered the rifle to Jones.

"What is it?" Jones asked as he took the rifle and tried to work its scope.

"Dozen Brutes, plus a chief." Shepard told him before pointing to the surrounding buildings. "If they keep coming this way we've in a good position to ambush them."

"Right, take that rifle and get up high. Find somewhere that you can see everything and when I give the signal blow that chieftain's brain out." Jones ordered before directing the rest of the squad to take positions.

Rushing to get up above the street and find somewhere to shoot from, Shepard climbed up rubble from a damaged building and hunkered down. As the Jiralhanae grew nearer, Shepard lined up a shot on the chieftain and waited for the signal. As the Jiralhanae passed where Shepard split from the squad, several grenades came flying into view. Taking that as the signal, Shepard dropped the chieftain and aimed turned to fire at a nearby Jiralhanae. As the Jiralhanae scattered for cover and came under fire from his squad mates, Shepard looked up from the scope to search for another target and spotted another group of Brutes rushing down the street to reinforce the ambushed group.

"Ah fuck me." Shepard cursed before opening fire on them. Two died

before they spotted his position and began weaving to avoid him getting a bead on them. One disappeared into a doorway only to emerge a minute later with a fuel rod gun levelled at his position. Diving for cover as the Brute fired Shepard cursed again. "Oh fuck me sideways."

Down below, the rest of the squad found itself struggling to deal with the additional Jiralhanae. But as more of their kind died, the remaining Jiralhanae began to go berserk and rush from cover only to be gunned down from several positions. By the time Shepard recovered from the explosion and made it down to ground level both sides were mostly dead. Targeting one of the two remaining enemies, Shepard opened fire with his MA5E. Jones and another private targeted the other, emptying the last of their magazines into the beast. With all visible hostiles down, Shepard holstered his rifle and made his way over to the others.

"How far left to go?" Shepard called before something to his right snarled. Turning Shepard could only watch as a wounded Jiralhanae lashed out with its Spiker, the bayonets slicing through his helmet and cutting deeply into his face. Turning the enraged Jiralhanae fired off a barrage at Jones and the private before turning back to the injured Shepard. As it raised the Spiker to impale him, a bright blue orb struck its shoulder. The stolen plasma grenade detonated and saved Shepard's life.

"You alive kid?" Jones called out as he made his way over. Crouching beside Shepard and removing the injured man's helmet, Jones inspected the damage. "Shit kid, that thing cut deep."

**XXXXXX**

_**I'm dyslexic, so please point out any mistakes in spelling or grammar [I spell things the way they do in England and Ireland, so some things may look off to Americans]. Please leave your opinion via review or send them via PM, I'd like to know what you think.
**_

**Well, I think that's everything I've gotta say so, hope you enjoyed the chapter.**

**This is Highvalour saying bye and thanks for reading**

2. Prologue Penal Squad - Pt2

**Another chapter, another attempt to entertain you all. I honestly do not have anything else to add, so on with the show!**

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XX Unpronounceable Jiralhanae Controlled Planet " 2773 XX

Jones did his best to treat Shepard's wounds but the man wasn't a medic so his treatment was little more than washing the cuts with disinfectant and coating the cuts in fast hardening Medi-Gel to

prevent protect the injury from dirt or debris. Once the gel had hardened he stuck Shepard with a local anaesthetic to kill the intense pain from the two deep gashes that marred his cheek and chin.

"C'mon kid, let's go." Jones said gruffly as he pulled Shepard to his feet and handed the younger man his gun. Unable to reply, numbness and hardened gel made moving his mouth impossible, Shepard simply took the weapon and surveyed the street. "C'mon, there might be more of them and we're a long way from friendlies."

'_Useless plastic piece of shit.' _Shepard seethed silently as he looked at his mangled helmet before tossing it away. _'Just my fucking luck, get drafted three months AFTER they swap out the old armoured Battle Dress Uniforms for these hardsuit pieces of shit!'

Making his way over to one of his former squad mate's bodies Shepard pried the dead man's helmet off and stuck it on.

"I thought those things are a package deal? You know, no mix and matching!" Jones asked as Shepard activated his wrist mounted computer and began typing away, pausing every few seconds to scan the new helmet. The turians called them something that translated as 'All Purpose Data and Flash Fabricating Tools', seems they invented the word just for it.

The 'All Purpose Data and Flash Fabricating Tool' was one of those alien technologies that even the more hard-line xenophobes accepted, as long as it was produced in a human factory. The lighter weight, more powerful processing power and ability be weaponized via thermal or electrical bursts meant it had quickly replaced the old TACPADS.

The human ones varied in quality and processing power from about level with your basic personal computer to 'I just hacked your website with the push of a button, while sitting here sipping my Frappuccino'. The basic model the UNSC got after tendering the contract fell closer to the former unfortunately but looked similar enough to the good ones that the Reds had arranged for a higher end one to be smuggled to Shepard for him to use. The OPI Technologies Mk.3 Omni-Tool® was god send for him.

"Where'd you learn to do that?" Jones asked in astonishment when Shepard's IFF replaced Wilkins' one on his display. When Shepard ignored him and retrieved the particle rifle Jones just shrugged and pulled up his own computer. "We're about six clicks from the forward outpost, c'mon."

The pair moved mostly in silence, Jones had tried to hold a one sided conversation at first but a withering glare from Shepard shut him up. Shepard didn't care if Jones came from a Dark World, he didn't care that their planet's thriving economy had dried up after they declared independence from Earth and had a UNSC enforced embargo slapped on them and he sure as hell didn't care that Jones was a teacher by trade who was only here to get UEG citizenship.

If these suits didn't have recorders in them I'd frag you right now and say I was the only survivorâ€¦ shit!' _Shepard thought before face palming. The suits had recording equipment in the helmets and once he got back they'd see he'd hacked the Wilkins' helmet and taken

it and that'd lead to questions about the Omni-Tool® andâ€| Andâ€|_ "How the fuck was I gonna explain the undamaged helmet covering these cuts? '_

"I've been thinking, maybe we should get off the streets. Use the buildings for coverâ€| We are just two guys now." Jones said as he pointed towards a large tower, partly demolished, whose wreckage formed a crude bridge between two other towers. "And if we use those we can cut some time off our trek."

Letting Jones take point, and ditching the particle rifle since the ICWs automatic fire would be more effective in the corridors, Shepard made his way up the steps leading to the closer tower.

Progress through up the tower was slow, damage had rendered many corridors and stairwells collapsed or blocked and they often ended up scaling rubble to advance up a story. Upon reaching the level that held the makeshift bridge Shepard began to reconsider crossing. Sure the massive section of collapsed building weighed who knew how many tonnes but Shepard couldn't shake that old vid cliché of the unstable walkway that threatened to collapse under the hero's weight as he crossed. The knowledge that this wasn't some Jovian action movie, but real life, made that image all the worse.

Staying low to avoid being spotted by any hostiles Shepard slowly advanced, heart pounding in what he could feel of his ears. Reaching halfway without any sign of the rubble shifting Shepard beckoned for Jones to follow and moved forward. As they searched for a way to safely descend the two levels between them and the next bridge the distinctive growls of a Kig-Yar rang out.

Shepard dropped flat and began frantically scanning the area for the hostile but spotted nothing. Jones, who was hunkered down near some rubble that had fallen from the floor above, leaned out over a hole in the wall and signalled for Shepard to join him.

"Sniper, below us." He hissed as he nodded out the hole, where the barrel of a particle rifle could be seen sticking out of a window a level below them. "Might be moreâ€| Do we engage or try and sneak past?"

Drawing his hand across his throat Shepard signalled his intent. The pair found a stairwell and descended a level, then retraced their steps to find the sniper's location. There was only one but the sounds of other Kig-Yar could be heard elsewhere on the floor. A flash of hand signals later Jones was positioning himself to cover Shepard's rear as Shepard himself set aside his assault rifle, drew his standard issue combat knife and advanced.

CRUNCH.

'_Shit.'_ Shepard thought as some loose rubble broke under his boot. The Kig-Yar turned, its beady eyes widened comically and it managed the beginnings of a startled shriek before Shepard fell on it and embedded the knife in its long neck.

A sharp beep, followed by Kig-Yar shrieks told Shepard he'd alerted the others.

"Catch kid." Jones called as he tossed the ICW to Shepard before

taking cover against a doorframe.

Catching the assault rifle Shepard rushed to join Jones, barely making it into cover before a group of Kig-Yar came rushing towards them. Bursts of superheated green plasma impacted the frames as the Kig-Yars rushed forward, seems the one Shepard killed was popular.

"Fire in the hole!" Jones yelled before tossing a frag grenade through the doorway. The resulting boom and Kig-Yar shrieks told Shepard he had some cover and, popping out of cover for an instant, downed two of the still standing Kig-Yars before the others could recover and retaliate. As he popped back behind cover, several crystalline shards whizzed past and embedded into the wall behind him. "Shit, Needler!"

Arming one of the plasma grenades he'd taken from the Kig-Yar snipers earlier Shepard tossed the explosive down the corridor and readied two grenades. As soon as he heard the plasma grenade detonate the frags went after, the flash of plasma masking them.

BOOM.

Leaning out again Shepard found the Needler carrying hostile, dazed and startled by the blasts, and put a few rounds into its skull. As the surviving hostiles fired on Shepard's side of the door Jones downed one and winged two more. A grenade from Shepard finished the fight.

"So much for being sneaky." Jones muttered as he and Shepard moved up the blood splattered, and explosion damaged, corridor. Looking over the corpses, and remembering how effective enemy tech tended to be, Jones started gathering grenades.

"What's it with you and their rifles?" Jones laughed when Shepard picked up a Type-51 Carbine and snagged a few spare magazines for it from a shrapnel riddled corpse.

Shrugging as he holstered the ICW on his back Shepard double checked the Carbine's magazine. With their grenades replenished and some liberated weapons, Jones had decided to nab the Needler, the pair pushed on. Crossing the second makeshift bridge they heard the sounds of battle, the 'ping' of mass accelerator rounds and the roar of the Jiralhanae 'Spiker'.

"Shit! Move it, move!" Jones ordered as the pair rushed through the ruined tower, descending this one much faster than they'd ascended the first. Making it to the streets they emerged about four hundred metres behind what remained of a Jiralhanae armoured column that had been ambushed by another UNSC patrol. The smouldering wreckage of the enemy vehicles, mostly Ghosts with two twisted Wraith remains as well, littered the street and where being used as cover by the Jiralhanae and Unggoy as they gave as good as they got from the UNSC marines.

Taking cover behind some rubble that had spilled onto the street Shepard and Jones got ready to open fire and provide assistance. The sounds of Type-51 Carbines and Needlers weren't the kinds of sounds Jiralhanae typically associated with hostility so few at the rear reacted when Shepard and Jones opened fire. In fact they didn't react

at all until the Needler shards began detonating and turned their own comrades into bombs.

The Jiralhanae found themselves in a tight spot, attempting to take cover from the UNSC marines would leave them open to Shepard and Jones while seeking cover from Shepard and Jones meant presenting themselves to the marines. The Jiralhanae captain, seeming to realise this and showing an unusual level of intelligence, levelled the massive Fuel Rod Cannon it carried at the building to its right and fired. The blast tearing a hole in the wall into which it seemed to order the others to retreat. The Unggoy didn't need to be told twice and ran as fast as their stumpy little legs could carry them. The Jiralhanae seemed hesitant to follow the order, their natural bloodlust made the idea of retreating something unaccustomed to them, but three of their numbers being dropped and another roar from the captain got them moving.

'_Not so fast.' _Shepard thought as he tracked the captain as it moved for the hole. As he fired the captain turned its head and let out a roar of rage that turned to a howl of agony as the Carbine's round ripped through the power armour's helmet and most likely part of the captain's face.

Rushing forward alongside Jones Shepard barely managed to resist the long Spike Grenades that came sailing out of the hole before Jones was tackling him to the ground. The grenades exploded, launching superheated barbed shrapnel out, and covered the Jiralhanae retreat.

XX Main Mess; The Fires Of Sol (Four Months Later) XX

Jones dropped down into the place opposite Shepard and began devouring his meal like a man starved. The pair had really bonded after they'd regrouped with allied troops and had thankfully been reassigned to the same squad afterwards. Their new squad was primarily made up of Dark Worlders like Jones as opposed to their previous squad where Jones and the two actual UNSC marines were the only ones who weren't there as an alternative to prison.

This change made it a lot easier for Jones as he was among others who were fighting for citizenship but meant Shepard was avoided. The pair of jagged scars the Spiker had given him, plus his gang tattoos, most have made for an intimidating appearance. He didn't really care though, the CO talked to him when he was to follow orders and Jones talked enough for the whole squad so he was happy to be left on his own.

"That was something else, right?" Jones chuckled in reference to their last mission where they'd gotten to see the results of a group of ODSs.

"Was pretty cool." Shepard agreed in between forkfuls of food. Turning to look at the others in their squad, who all look down at their food when his eyes fell on them, and looking back to Jones Shepard continued. "Although I'm surprised you like them, don't the ODSs spent as much time fucking over you Innies as they do the Baby Kongs?"

"Hahahahaâ€¦ Ha, fuck you Earthborn. Fuck you very much." Jones snapped, although the smile on his face said he didn't really mind.

"So, you any idea what you gonna do once you're done in the Penal System?"

"I'm a year into a five year stretch, and they call what we're in Suicide Squads for a reason, so I ain't making any plans until my release papers are signed and in my hand." Shepard told him as he snatched the bread roll off of Jones' tray. "Thanks."

"No no, help yourself. Not like I might have wanted to eat it or anything." Jones said tiredly before Shepard tossed his own dessert over to him.

"What about you, how long left?" Shepard asked as he tore into the roll.

"I'm a teacher, or I was one back home, so I figured I'd get a job teaching." Jones told him, a happy smile on the man's face.

"You were a teacher?" Shepard asked, feigning total surprise to annoy him. "You never told me thatâ€¦ What'd you teach?"

"Ha. Ha. Ha." Jones said slowly. "You know, you should be a comedian when you finish hereâ€¦ Because you are just hilarious."

"Will I certainly know how to knock 'em dead, don't I?" Shepard joked as he finished his food. "Talk to you later Jones."

**XXXXX**

**So that's chapter two. I'm planning to spend a few chapters building up to the Eden Prime mission, showing Shepard as he goes through his sentence and later after he joined the Marine Corps proper. This chapter should have been up a day or two ago but the computer I was using was acting up and that made making the Timeline I've posting in my Forum take longer than I thought [even though making the Timeline mostly just involved copy-pasting stuff from the Halo and Mass Effect wikis then editing the dates or adding in my own little things]. I'll be adding the final section of the Timeline [Shanxi War to Eden Prime] over the next few days and then I'll either throw up a brief political overview as, describing the relationship humanity has with certain races, or do a brief detail on human weapons and armour as of 2773.**

_**Shepard will be closer to a Mass Effect Infiltrator [skilled marksman with computer skills]. I'm also going to be changing around the service history of several human characters, reflecting the fact that the UNSC is **__**not**__** the Systems Alliance. Expect Shepard to meet some characters earlier then in canon or to not meet them until much later. Also expect human characters to have somewhat different personalities due to the changes in their race's history.**_

**Well, I think that's everything I've gotta say so, hope you enjoyed the chapter.**

**This is Highvalour saying bye and thanks for reading**

**Planning to start showing events outside of those just involving Shepard, either as potential starting points for subplots/spin-offs or just to write something different. This first one follows that Captain Shepard shot in the face last chapter.**

**Another chapter, another attempt to entertain you all. I honestly do not have anything else to add, so on with the show!**

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XX Jiralhanae Cruiser the Ferocious Doctrine â€" 2773 XX

Kamak did his best not to show his fear, jiralhanae could smell fear and often said it made unggoy taste better. The Alpha Jiralhanae who had been placed in command of the attack on the planet was ranting and raging at his surviving forces. The big dumb brute didn't care that they'd been fighting sangheili and humans or that his stupid decisions on where the big guns went left them unable to fight properly, he was just afraid this loss would look bad on him. They'd barely managed to get back to the troop carriers before he'd ordered the cruiser into the Void.

Kamak did his best to focus on the Alpha Jiralhanae while also scanning the remaining Lances. Most where more heavily beaten than the one he belonged too, some consisting of only a single jiralhanae or unggoy. Actually, the Lance under the command of Wotanizus seemed to be one of the largest remaining. That was bad.

"And you!" The Alpha snarled as he rounded on Wotanizus, his long braided beard swinging from his chin as he did so. "You fled from battle! The others forced to retreat, their numbers whittled down but youâ€¦| YOU RAN!"

"I would not see my pack destroyed due to a fool's planning!" Wotanizus snapped back only to receive a brutal blow to his damaged left eye, where the human reinforcements' carbine round had struck him.

"Watch your tone whelp! We are far from Doisac and your uncle's favouritism will not protect you." The Alpha growled as he stared down at the hissing Wotanizus in reference to his familial relation to the Chief of Chiefs and the younger jiralhanae's rapid advancement through the ranks. "Speak to me like that again and I will kill you myself."

But Wotanizus refused to be cowed by the Alpha and stared right back, teeth bared in challenge. Even when the Alpha readied his massive hammer Wotanizus did not falter and something, either respect for the younger jiralhanae's courage or fear of his uncle, stayed the Alpha's hand.

"Your actions have brought the stench of shame aboard this shipâ€¦| And only blood will wash it clean." The Alpha growled before pointing past Wotanizus with his hammer. "Kill them."

"What!?" One of Kamak's fellow unggoy squeaked.

"Wotanizus has brought shame on all of you by making you flee from battle, now he will release you from this shame." The Alpha explained with a cruel chuckle, Wotanizus had ordered the retreat to avoid his pack's destruction and now would be forced to kill themâ€¦ Or be killed himself.

"Youâ€¦ Noâ€¦ I will not!" Wotanizus roared but was prevented from lunging at the Alpha when the older jiralhanae's hammer hummed warningly.

"Do it, or it will be your blood that washes away the stink on my ship." The Alpha threatened.

"The stench of shameâ€¦ It does hang heavy over this ship. And only blood will wash it away." Wotanizus growled as he turned to face his pack. The jiralhanae's single remaining eye swept over the assembled jiralhanae and unggoy, his thoughts and intentions unreadable. "But I feel only the one who brought it upon us can wash it away!"

With that declaration of intent Wotanizus drew his pistol and turned, the long curved blade attached to his weapon's guard coming down on the Alpha's hand. With a howl of pain the Alpha reflexively released his grip on the hammer before recovering and swatting the pistol from Wotanizus' grip then tackled his opponent. The jiralhanae snarled and roared in amusement as the young Captain challenged the ship's Alpha. They chanted and yelled as the one eyed challenger did his best against the older and more powerful Alpha.

Kamak and his unggoy brethren retreated out of the way, when jiralhanae got excited unggoy often got crushed. As he tried to put as much distance between himself and the fighting Kamak heard Wotanizus howl in agony, Wotanizus had held the upper hand but lost it after the Alpha dug his thumb into the wounded jiralhanae's damaged eye. As Wotanizus reared back in agony the Alpha forced him to the ground.

Dropping down and kneeling on Wotanizus chest the Alpha pinned the young Captain to the ground and began peeling away the helmet, he clearly wanted to see his victim's face as the life was crushed out of the body.

"The Captain's gonna die!" an unggoy to Kamak's right shrieked.

"Someone help!" Another cried

"Run! Run! Run! We'll be next!" a third whimpered.

Agreeing with the third one Kamak began frantically looking for the exit. And then he saw it, the Captain's pistol. To the jiralhanae the Type-52 Pistol was just that, a pistol, but to the small frame of an unggoy it was more like a human shotgun. A powerful shotgun with enough kick to knock Kamak off his feet when he fired it at the Alpha.

"Gah!" The Alpha snarled as his shields, already weakened from Wotanizus' attacks, failed and his armour absorbed the rest of the impact from Kamak's panicked attack. He wasn't injured, just startled

as no jiralhanae would ever expect to be attacked by another during a challenge for leadership.

The time it took for him to gather himself, plus the second it took to find the terrified Kamak, proved fatal however as the enraged captain beneath him lunged forward and sank fangs into his throat. Swinging his fist down he knocked the younger jiralhanae loose but the berserking Wotanizus simply tossed him away before the Alpha could do anything.

"AAARGGH!" Wotanizus screamed as he fell on the Alpha, fists pounding away at the older jiralhanae's head and face with enough force to dent and warp the armoured headdress worn as a mark of station. When Wotanizus calmed down enough to think clearly the Alpha was a twitching lump of muscle and fur with pulp for a head. When his still furious eye fell on Kamak, the little unggoy nearly fainted with fear. "You! Unggoy! Your dare attack during a challenge!?"

"Iâ€¦ Iâ€¦ He would have killed youâ€¦" Kamak managed to whimper before his voice died, taking the 'and then us as well' that should have ended that sentence with it. Something that may have been for the best.

"Your name?" Wotanizus snarled as he began to advance his trembling little saviour.

"I-I-I'm Kamak, I have served you since we left Doisacâ€¦" Kamak whispered as Wotanizus towered over him. Noticing he still held the pistol in his hands Kamak quickly held it out and began repeatedly apologising.

"â€¦Keep it, as a sign of your new station." Wotanizus grunted before turning away and retrieving the still twitching Alpha's hammer. Pausing to study the weapon/ status symbol for a moment he then snarled with rage as he brought the hammer down, pommel first, and 'planted' it in the Alpha's chest like a banner.

"N-New station?" Kamak asked after a moment, his brain having been too preoccupied with him not being killed to fully register the words.

"Should the next few minutes go in my favour, you shall serve as my personal attendant." Wotanizus growled as he turned slowly to study the assembled jiralhanae, many of whom looked unhappy. "For now you and your fellow unggoy may leave. Treat your injuries and then feast, you all have earned it!"

Kamak was nearly swept away in the rush as the other unggoy departed. Managing to get his footing by the doors Kamak stopped and watched as Wotanizus flashed a cruel and bloodthirsty smile.

"If any object to a half blind 'whelp' taking command, voice your objections now." He snarled while reaching out to gently lay a hand on the hammer. "If not, take a knee and submit!"

XX Armoury; The Fires Of Sol â€" 2774 XX

Shepard accepted the hardsuit handed to him with a scowl. OPI Technologies may have pulled that plastic piece of crap but they'd replaced it with something barely any better in Shepard's eyes. Sure

it had a bit more padding, and the shields where meant to be stronger, but it was still a glorified jumpsuit they expected him to wear while fighting 500KG space-gorilla that could probably bench Shepard's old car.

Moving into the small walled area where he and his squad could change Shepard began stripping off his fatigues and suited up. To look at the 'Victor' didn't look at the different to the 'Reclaimer' hardsuit, chest was a little bulkier and the pauldrons larger but it was really just the same old piece of crap. It even had the same crappy 'urban camo' pattern that was absolutely useless for the Penal Squads since the UNCS painted big red markings on the armour so they'd be easily differentiated from standard marines.

"Never gets old, seeing you scared of a damn helmet." Jones chuckled to his right as the older man finished his systems check.

"Ain't scared, just wondering why we have to wear this piece of crap instead of those big sturdy BDUs the marines use to have." Shepard corrected as he popped his helmet on and began running his own systems check.

"I'll tell you whyâ€|" A particularly unpleasant member of the squad by the name of McKay spat before leaning in towards Shepard for a conspiratorial whisper. "It's because those filthy xenophiles get a twisted hard-on every time they see us dress up like turians!"

"Huh, the idea that anyone could get a hard-on looking at someone as repulsive as you just boggles the mind." Shepard snorted, electing a dirty stare from the serial killer he was forced to work alongside.

"Knock it off ladies, Albatrosses drop in five so cut the chatter and get your guns." Their sergeant ordered, potentially preventing Shepard from getting to kick McKay's teeth in.

Letting McKay push past him Shepard waited a minute before joining Jones in the queue to be handed their weapons. While Shepard understood why they did this, no one in their right mind would let convicts have the same kind of access to weapons or armour as the standard marines, he still found it degrading having to line up in full view of the real marines and be handed a rifle. When he made it to the counter, and scanned his IFF, the quartermaster paused.

"Huh, that's new." The old marine grumbled before leaning to her right and set down a DMR in front of him. "Didn't think any of you idiots could be trusted to work anything above the ICW."

"Ehâ€| I took some qualifying exam down at the practice range butâ€|" Shepard began before the quartermaster cut him off.

"Don't care about your life's story, now get out of the way his I can arm the rest of you idiots!" She snapped at him.

Moving away Shepard took one of the modified PDPs, locked like the rifles so that they cannot be used until a sergeant issues a code groundside, and joined his squad. Strapping himself into the Albatross and stowing his rifle Shepard activated his VISR's uplink to the UNSC Database. Sure the Penal Squads had little to no real clearance but Shepard had worked out a way to patch his Omni-Tool

into his VISR and that let him run some bypasses. A display taking up nearly half of Shepard's field of view popped up and began giving him Intel on the MA-403 DMR.

Someone nudged Shepard causing him to close his link. Looking to his side he spotted Jones, noticeable by his IFF, looking at him and nodding towards the sergeant who was glaring at Shepard.

"Lose the porn feed, I'm explaining what the objective is." The Sergeant was an asshole, way worse than the one Shepard and Jones had served under before, and seemed to hold each and every member of the squad in contempt.

"Hahahaâ€¦| Didn't know those rumours about marines wanking over their guns was true." Shepard laughed, adding to why their sergeant especially disliked him. "I was checking the new gun, forewarned and all that."

"Sure you were." The sergeant said sarcastically. "Now, as I was saying, our target is a beryllium processing plant the Brutes set up. Recon says limited security so we're looking at grunt workers, Jacket watchers and whatever Brutes got sent to oversee the lot. We're part of the force ordered to capture this plant."

"Isn't this some ODST bullshit, why are we going?" Someone interrupted.

"Because our orders are to capture, not destroy, the facility. Beryllium serves some role in constructing their ships, so handing it over to the sangheili will boost their war effort." The sergeant informed them.

"WHAT!?" McKay roared. "Bad enough we're running around in turian pyjamas but now we're running jobs for those split-jawed bastards! Fuck that!"

"You'll do what you're told, convict, or so help me I will shoot you myself." Shepard really hoped the sergeant did that, McKay was an ass and he really hoped the man got fragged.

Whatever classy response McKay had planned to retort with was forgotten when another Penal Squad boarded the carrier and their sergeant informed them of the mission, with no complaints or backtalk. As the Albatross began its decent Shepard used his Omni-Tool to hack into the dropship's external cameras. Completely replacing his HUD with the sight of heat and friction and the planet below. Shepard loved this, just watching the planet growing larger and closer during re-entry.

XX Beryllium Processing Plant; Lorn V XX

The squad moved forward, through the thick foliage that surrounded the plant. Shepard was apart from the main group, the sergeant having ordered him to act as a scout, and so he was the first to get a clear look at the plant. No real walls to speak of at the boundaries, but the buildings themselves looked thick and solid. If they jiralhanae locked it down before anyone secured a hold this would be a lot harder. Scanning the lush greenery Shepard spotted the IFFs from nearly a dozen different squads as positioning themselves for the attack. The VISR programming also let him pick up the readings of any

enemy combat harness in range, which was worrying.

"Sergeant, this looks wrong." Shepard reported in as the rest of the squad moved up. "No way the Albatrosses went unnoticed but there's no sign they even registered us."

"Brutes are thick as posts, what do you expect?" Someone from the back of the squad snorted.

"No he's rightâ€¦ Grunts just moving about, acting normal." The sergeant said just as the order to move came through.

BOOM!

The distinct sound of a round from a jiralhanae grenade launcher, or Brute-Shot, exploding rang out as the other squads moved forward. Particle Rifle rounds, coming from Kig-Yar snipers atop the plant's roof, began taking pot-shots at the marines and Penal Squads members moving forward.

"Fuck that." Shepard spat before diving back into the cover of the local foliage. Readying his DMR and tracking the trails from the Kig-Yar shots Shepard lined up a shot and dropped one. A retaliatory shot from another sniper sent Shepard running, skirting the edges of cover looking for another firing position. Taking another shot, Shepard wounded a sniper and was moving again before its friends got target him.

"Kid! Kid where are you?" Jones' voice buzzed over comms.

"Hidden in the trees, taking shots at the snipers." Shepard replied as he crouched down and readied another shot. "Where are you?"

"He's firing on the snipers from the treeline." Jones said to someone, most likely the sergeant. After a bit of back and forth Jones addressed Shepard again. "That was close, Sarge was about to kill your guns for deserting."

"Where the hell does he expect me to desert too?" Shepard asked out of genuine curiosity. "Command gave me the long range and accurate gun that won't do me any good in close, right? So it makes sense I stay back and use itâ€¦ Another Jackal down!"

"Good point, I'll tell him that." Jones laughed before screams of 'Incoming!' rang out and the sounds of explosions came from the plant's main courtyard.

"Shit! Shit, shit, crap, dammit." Shepard cursed as he downed another sniper. He'd stopped moving in between shots as the soldiers in the courtyard kept the Kig-Yar from focusing on him. Although now he had to as he had no clear shots left.

Moving forward in search of a target Shepard reflected on how bad an op this was. No support, no real plan and no groundside reconâ€¦ Whoever planned this clusterfuck had better lose their job over it. When he reached the courtyard he found a jiralhanae Captain and over twenty unggoy dead along with the bodies of many humans. The remaining soldiers were either busy attempting to breach and secure the plant itself or providing suppressing fire to keep the remaining snipers pinned down and unable to fire on them.

"Blast it open!" Shepard's sergeant ordered before noticing Shepard's approach. "You! I never ordered you to stay back! You just bought yourself another year in the system, at least!"

"Yeah and how many of those snipers have you taken out?" Shepard spat as he squared up to the NCO. "This whole operation is bullshit and I for one refuse to die because of bullshit. So you got a problem with me thinking things out, fuck you!"

"Enough!" Another sergeant ordered. This sergeant, older and holding seniority over Shepard's one, ordered the marines to use enemy plasma grenades to breach the doors and told Shepard, along with a group of standard marines, to move through the facility and take the roof. "Deal with those damn Jackals, understood?"

"Yes Sir." Shepard said with a salute, just to annoy his sergeant, as the doors to the facility where blasted open and UNSC personnel flooded in to kill or capture anyone inside.

**XXXX**

**Something of a running joke it seems will be my use of taking Warhammer 40k planet names and using them for jiralhanae/sangheili controlled planets. Did it in the CODEX timeline without realising it and just caught myself doing it here. I'm gonna keep doing it since I like 40K, not as much as Warhammer Fantasy, and it's a good source of names.**

**Next chapter should see Shepard released from his service in the suicide squads and we'll be moving into him as a member of the UNSC proper. The CODEX has a mostly complete timeline up until the Eden Prime mission as well as entries on guns and BDU/hardsuits.**

**Another chapter, another attempt to entertain you all. I honestly do not have anything else to add, so on with the show!**

**Halo belongs to Microsoft Studios**

**Mass Effect belongs to belongs to Bioware**

**XXXXX**

4. Prologue Helljumper Training - Pt1

Another chapter, another attempt to entertain you all. I honestly do not have anything else to add, so on with the show!

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XX Skitarii; Tyran - 2776 CE XX

Screams and gunfire mingled with the sounds of agonised roars as

civilians fled from the mutated attackers. The Flood, or some kind of other creature horrific creature that infects and mutates others to propagate, tore through Tyran's capital city. The things acted like the Flood, seeking to attack and infect as many people as possible while showing little to no sense of self preservation. All that mattered was spreading the infecting. Skitarii's civilian police force had broken down, officers fleeing with the masses, and it was up to sporadic groups of the city's UNSC Army garrison to try and hold the line.

The creatures lacked the sensory tentacles of standard Flood combat forms, instead seeming to rely on the host body's eyes and ears to find targets. Instead of the brown-green biomass the Flood produced the creatures seemed to be mutating the host bodies to create thicker, denser muscle mass. The creatures also seemed to sport massive, pincer like claws as opposed to the Flood's tentacles.

"How the fuck are these things spreading so fast?" Corporal Matsuki wondered dumbfound as the squad caught their breath atop a bank.

"Infection is spread on contact. No need for Infection Forms." Lance Corporal Agu noted as he checked on the squad's resident rookie.

"Command, Command come in! This is Lieutenant Shepard repeated over and over, trying to get evac for him and his squad. "I repeat, this is Lieutenant Shepard. My squad is un-infected and has Intel relating to the outbreak. We require immediate evacâ€¦ Come in Command-

"Give it up Shep, we've been burned." Matsuki sighed bitterly. "They're gonna deny we were in the city and say we died tragically while out on that 'training exercise'â€¦ We're screwed."

"If it's any consolation the Rookie is fine." Agu chimed in, trying to find the silver lining amongst a solar system of jet black clouds. "Claws tore through the ceramic and punctured the titanium in places but didn't make it to the Kevlarâ€¦ As long as he avoids any gut shots kid'll be alright."

"Tunnels are gone." Shepard announced as soon as the report showed up on his VISR. "Pelicans took out the island side entrances and Army has blockades at the other endâ€¦ Orders are to shot on sight if anyone tried to escape."

"So what? We just sit tight, avoiding the monsters until Blackwatch arrives and clears this up?" Private Smith asked, the naivety and wide eyed innocence actually making Shepard uncomfortable.

"Kid Blackwatch is gonna Glass this city, hell maybe the entire region, to make sure whatever ever the fuck that was doesn't get loose!" Agu snapped gruffly, man was one hell of a medic but his bedside manner left a lot to be desired. "Matsuki called it, we've been burned."

"We're getting out of here." Shepard snarled as a civilian transport attempted to escape the blockade, only to be blown out of the skies by patrolling Pelicans. No way the UNSC was gonna risk this outbreak spreading. As the flaming wreckage plummeted downward into the dark

waters of the river Varnak an idea began to form in Shepard's mind. It was the kind of idea that normally one would dismiss out of hand and deny ever even having it, but right now Shepard was desperate enough to try anything. "Hey Rookieâ€| Your seals still good?"

XX Acheron Fossae; Mars â€" 18 Months Previous XX

Hidden mines detonated, simulating artillery fire, as the members of Hastati Squad moved across the battlefield. One of nearly a dozen squads comprised of candidates for the 105th Marine Expeditionary Unit, the most prestigious Orbital Drop Shock Trooper combat unit there was. Every year nearly three hundred potentials, drawn from all four branches of the UNSC, were offered the chance to compete. The chance to train and test oneself to the extreme and hopefully become ODSs, the best humanity fieldedâ€| The single largest group to be passed in the last century was twenty five.

Hastati was comprised of four Marine candidates; a Sergeant with close to twenty years combat experience, a Corporal who'd done nine years against the worst the Jiralhanae have to offer and a pair of newly minted lieutenants who had both bartered their time in the Penal Squads to get officer training.

"Down!" Shepard growled as he tackled Sergeant Masaki out of the way as Hoplite Squad, made up of members of the UNSC Army, emerged from cover and opened fire. Modified ICWs, adjusted to fire significantly weaker rounds that delivered a weak electrical charge, whizzed past as Shepard and Masaki hit the ground and rolled apart.

Corporal Malone and Lieutenant Leng provided suppressing fire with their own ICWs while Sergeant Masaki brought her MA-TS8g combat shotgun up and caught one unfortunate soldier square in the chest. The man gave a pained groan as lights built into his armour flashed, signalling his 'death' and that he should be ignored. Shepard tossed a training grenade then dove behind cover. Once clear of the enemies' line of sight he set off, using the simulated city ruins to cover his movement as he pushed forward to flank the enemy.

Emerging from the ruins of what was meant to have been a shopping centre Shepard fired off a round from his DMR, the stun round pinging off the helmet of a Hydra hardsuit wearing soldier. Ducking back into the centre Shepard listened to the sounds of rounds pummeling into the doorframe he'd hidden behind while the occasional tracer flickered past. The boom of a shotgun firing, followed by the sounds of ICWs off to the side, told him the other members of Hastati Squad had used his distraction to push forward and finish off Hoplite.

"All good Sarge?" Shepard asked casually as he stopped a grumbling soldier and plucked a grenade from the man's belt, secure and replenish whenever possible on the battlefield after all.

"I'm fine Lieutenant. Thanks for the save." Masaki replied as she paused to brush some dust and dirt off her hardsuit. The four members of Hastati Squad moved into the centre and paused. Shepard had his HOLOPAD up and projecting a 3D map of the area for them to study.

"Fastest route to the central plaza is through that tower across from us, then north." Leng pointed out.

Second Lieutenant Kai Leng was two years Shepard's junior but, thanks to some falsified papers, had just as along a service record as the former gang member. Earthborn, Leng's parents had been political dissidents before they split completely with hundreds of others to settle the 'Independent Human Colony Mindoir'. On Mindoir, the separatists found everything they wanted. Freedom from the oppressive control of the United Earth Government. Freedom from the UEG's fascist attack dog the UNSC's Freedom from the powerful ground forces the UNSC placed on every colony to protect it from alien aggressors. This last fact proved to be Mindoir's undoing when batarian slavers attacked in 2770. The farms and communes had little to no defence against the well-armed and determined slavers. By the time the batarians where finished less than one hundred of the colony's six thousand settlers remained. Close to four thousand had been killed in the attack, the remainder unfortunately found themselves subjected to horrific implanting in preparation for their new lives as slaves.

The fourteen year old Kai, who had survived because he'd been traveling between communes with a family friend to trade, was left orphaned and alone. Two year later the boy had use falsified records to apply for, and be accepted for, the chance to serve in a Penal Squad to earn his UEG citizenship. By the time his deception was found out Leng already had his citizenship and, like Shepard, was planning to use a recent officer recruitment drive to upskill himself and continue his military career. With was his exemplarily record, and one understanding recruitment officer, that kept Leng from having his application rejected and maybe his citizenship revoked.

"That leaves us too exposed, better to swing north-west and approach the plaza from the opposite side." Masaki countered. Sergeant Rachel Masaki was a native of Cadia, one of the closest human worlds to Jiralhanae Space. Facing more kig-yar raids and jiralhanae assaults than any other human world the Cadians where unsurprisingly some of the most militarised and combat ready humans in existence. It was rare to see a Candian serve in the Marines, and almost unheard off for one to serve in the Navy, as most preferred to carry out the planetary defence roles the UNSC Army and Air Force specialised in.

"We don't have the time." Corporal Malone grumbled. Shepard didn't know much about the man other than what his features and name implied, African and Irish heritage, since he hadn't been willing to share when the squad had been introduced earlier that day. "Leng is right."

"Lieutenant Leng." Leng corrected.

"Knock it off, both of you." Shepard ordered, cutting off any possible infighting. Malone resented the fact that it took nine years for him to be noticed by the 105th while Shepard and Leng only had to do three and a half years in Penal, then rush through officer training, to get offered a chance. Shepard had considered telling the cranky old asshole that maybe he should have made more of an effort to impress whoever it was that sent out the invites, but didn't since it'd just provoke the rather large man into attacking him. "The Sergeant is right, that route leaves us too exposed-"

"We don't have time." Leng cut in.

"I know, but being late is better than dead!" Shepard growled, shutting the other Lieutenant up. Taking a moment to study the map Shepard tried to think of another possible route, one that provided plenty of cover but would get them there in good time. As he traced his finger from the plaza along the possible routes to take Shepard's eyes drifted to Masaki, and he recalled something she'd said during their introductions. "Hey Sarge, you have demo training right?"

"Yeahâ€¦ Why?" Masaki asked slowly, confusion and a tiny hint of unease in her voice.

"Because this building-" Shepard began as he pointed to a point on the map. "- backs right onto the plaza, pretty close to the bunker entrance, and is on the route you pointed out. We have training grenades, which have a small explosive charge, and some of these wrecked vehicles still have fuel cellsâ€¦ Think you can jury-rig up an IED, blast through the walls?"

"Iâ€¦ Ehâ€¦ Maybe." Masaki began before falling silent. When she spoke again she nearly torpedoed Shepard's plan. "VISR data says the building is meant to be a bank, vault walls will be too thick for an IED to breach."

"Then we avoid the vault, blast out an office on one of the upper floors and drop." Leng commented, showing his support for the plan.

"It'll still take too long, best bet is through the tower and straight north." Malone objected.

"Might work. Head for the bank, procure a fuel cell on routeâ€¦ Blast should catch anyone fighting in the plaza off-guard, we might be able to rush the bunker before they can recover." Masaki murmured. "alright Lieutenant, we'll do it your way."

The team made good time, travelling at a steady pace, through the simulated ruins. As they turned onto the street the fake bank was located on Corporal Malone pointed out that the IED wasn't needed, since the upper levels had windows they could drop down from instead. Moving into the bank, covering any and all possible ambush points along the way, Hastati Squad ascended to the first floor. Masaki was on point, her combat shotgun well suited to the tight stairwell and maze of cubicles they travelled through, with Leng and Malone close behind to watch the flanks. Shepard took up the rear, MA-PDP drawn since the DMR was less than ideal for close combat. The sounds of gunfire rang out from the rear of the building, at least two other potential squads had made it to the plaza it seems.

Moving to cover under one of the large windows, somewhere one normally would avoid due to an ICWs penetrative power but the weapons in use would be too weak to punch through, Shepard holstered the pistol and readied his DMR. Leng and Malone took a window to his left while Masaki took cover to his right.

"Ideas?" Shepard asked.

"I count three separate squads, two Marine and one Army." Malone reported as he peeked up and surveyed the plaza. "Looks like the

Marines have ganged up on the Army boysâ€¦ No one seems too close to the bunker entrance."

"Army are pinned down directly across from us, using those raised garden features as cover." Leng added. "Marine squads at Eleven and Two o'clock respectiveâ€¦ Army isn't gonna hold out much longer."

"Don't have a clear shot on anyone at Two o'clock, but I think I can get at least two of the Marines at Eleven." Shepard muttered as he smashed out the remaining glass panels, the sounds of ICW fire and distant explosions drowning out the noise. "If you could position yourselves to hit the squad at Two o'clock we could drop a lot quickly."

"You want to hit the Marines first?" Malone snapped, inter-service rivalry had him wanting to team up and finish off the Army first.

"Why not just ignore them, move for the bunker while they're distracted with one another?" Leng asked.

"too risky, second they see someone moving for the bunker they'll all turn around and open fire." Masaki said. "Area around the bunker entrance is too exposed, we wouldn't stand a chance."

"We have to clear them out, and hitting the Marines is better since the Army has already taken a pounding. Marines are in better shape so taking them out is the best course of action." Shepard explained. "Drop down and get into position, I'll wait for you signal before I take a shot."

Masaki, Malone and Leng dropped through the busted window Shepard was hidden behind and moved out along the edge of the plaza. Using the features and large decorative flower beds as cover the majority of Hastati Squad positioned themselves to strike. While they'd been moving the Army squad, who had been whittled down to just one soldier, managed to eliminate two Marines.

"Malone in position."

"Leng ready."

"Fire when ready Lieutenant."

Boom!

The Marine's shields dropped, and the 'dead' lights flickered on, almost immediately. The sounds of two more ICWs joining the fray, and the deep boom of a shotgun, rang out as Shepard lined up another shot. Another shot, shields dropped but no lights. Checking the VISR display Shepard tracked his squad's movements. Three green blips moving around, slowly inching their way towards a lone red blip while two red blips calmly moved off.

'_First Marine squad down, looks like they're heading for the Army lad.' _Shepard thought before popping up and searching for another target. Realising he couldn't get a clean shot Shepard prepared to move. A glance at his HUD had Shepard opening a channel to the Squad. "Incoming, plaza's southern entrance. Watch your rear."

"understood, do you have visual?" Leng radioed back.

"Negative, VISR readings only. Dropping down and repositioning for better vantage." Shepard told them before vaulting through the window and rushing to northward. Skidding to halt behind cover Shepard took aim and dropped another of the other Marines just as the newcomers, armour marking them as Naval, entered the plaza and opened fire.

"Hostile down!" Leng called out over the comms channel as his ICW fire downed the shields and triggered the lights on one. Space seemed to distort over by where the Naval personnel were taking cover just before one, surrounded by a shimmering blue nimbus, rose and made a backhand motion. The decorative plant pot Leng was hidden behind shattered and the Lieutenant was sent flying back.

"Biotic!" Malone roared as he popped out of cover to grab the dazed Leng and drag him to safety.

"Grenade out." Masaki yelled as she tossed the training grenade and managed to eliminate the last two Marines. "Shifting focus. Shepard take out that biotic!"

"Roger Sergeant, provide suppressive fire while I relocate for better shot." Shepard replied before making a break, heading back down the edges of the plaza in search of a chance to flank and ambush the Naval squad.

"Frag out!" That was Malone, the following booms indicating he'd tossed two grenades. An outburst of rather colourful Australian swearwords signalled one of the Naval boys being eliminated.

"Shields down, shit shields down!" That was Leng, who'd popped out of cover to let of a volley of ICW fire only to take several rounds himself. "Still in the gameâ€¦ That was close."

"Stay in cover, fully recharge before attempting to engage again." Shepard ordered as Shepard stayed low and moved from cover, another four metres and he'd be behind the enemy squad. The roar of an ICW and the ping of rounds hitting the ground behind him told Shepard he'd been spotted. "Shit! Masaki. Malone. Draw their fire, get them looking away from me!"

No one replied, but the sounds of ICWs and a combat shotgun rang out and Shepard found the suppressive fire directed at him ended. Peeking out Shepard spotted his chance. The biotic was generating dark energy for another gravity distorting display, and that made identifying her easy. Lining up his shot, Shepard waited until the biotic was up and fired.

"Shit." Shepard gulped when his shot was stopped by a biotic barrier the Naval officer had enveloped herself in. Quickly getting another shot off Shepard managed to break through the biotic barrier but before he could try and down her suits shielding a wave of gravity twisting dark energy hit him square in the chest. The impact didn't send Shepard flying, as he'd expected, but instead seemed to act as a tether with which the biotic was easily able to pull the 90kg plus armour Shepard forward a solid five metres. Hitting the ground hard

enough to drive the air from his lungs, Shepard wasn't able to move fast enough to avoid the biotic levelling her ICW at him. "Ah crap!"

Boom!

The Naval officer was knocked ass over head by Sergeant Masaki's shotgun as Sergeant scored a direct hit on the woman's exposed back. Malone and Leng ended the other Naval combatants with ICW fire.

"Up you get Shepard." Leng chuckled as he reached down to pull Shepard to his feet.

"Thanks." Shepard groaned as he got up and retrieved his DMR. "Let's get into that bunker and finish this before anyone else arrives."

XXXXX

I'm dyslexic, so please point out any mistakes in spelling or grammar [I spell things the way they do in England and Ireland, so some things may look off to Americans]. Please leave your opinion via review or send them via PM, I'd like to know what you think.

Well, I think that's everything I've gotta say so, hope you enjoyed the chapter.

This is Highvalour saying bye and thanks for reading.

5. NOT A CHAPTER: BIG INFORMATION DUMP!

**ATTENTION! STOP READING NOW IF YOU WILL BE UNHAPPY THAT I 'SERIOUSLY UNDERPOWERED THE HALO UNIVERSE'... THIS STORY IS MEANT TO BE A BALANCE BETWEEN BOTH. HUMANITY WILL NOT BE SUPER OP JUST BECAUSE YOU WANT THEM TO BE... IF YOU HAVE A COMMENT BEYOND "UNDER UNDER-POWERED HALO" AND WANT TO ARGUE THAT POINT, PLEASE LEAVE IT IN A REVIEW OR PM. OTHERWISE THANKS FOR READING THIS FAR, BUT STOP NOW.**

**Right, I should have done something like this at first but I didn't want to. The CODEX forum thread was meant to be where I'd answer any questions, with the answers left there for others to come along and read as well but I've been getting plenty of people asking questions [and more than a few bitching] about changes I made for my story.**

**I am going to go through the basis of the story and cover the following issues; Humanity's decision to replace their old gas operated guns with the Mass Accelerator. Why humanity doesn't have plasma weapons as standard and why kinetic barriers are used in place of Energy Shielding, Human-Sangheili relations, Human-Citadel Relations [broken down by Council race] and humanity's barely contained hate for 'Independent Colonies' which exist scattered through the Attican Traverse and along the Terminus Systems.**

_***Minor Edit 03-01-16 to fix mislabelling of turians as quarians and to insert word AI where site removed for some

reason.**_

{Bold} is Author's Notes

UNSC Battle Dress Uniform Vs. Hardsuits

The Marine Corps Battle Dress Uniform, commonly shortened to just the BDU, was the main combat gear issued to members of the Marine Corps since the formation of the United Nations Space Command until it was officially replaced by the OPI Technologies produced 'Reclaimer' hardsuit. The BDU was made up of ballistic armour which provided protection to the torso, shoulders, forearms, the thighs and the lower legs [on Marine variants only]. The BDU was never equipped with energy shielding. While the Spartan-II's got shielding, and the ODSs were fitted with weaker versions near the end of the war, it was considered too expensive to outfit every single soldier with Energy shields {**to quote Batman Begins "Bean counters didn't think a soldier's life was worth 300 grand."**}. The BDU variants used during the Shanxi War did have kinetic barriers, but these were basic and mostly ineffective.

Humanity improved their shields by reverse engineering technology to upgrade their own from salvaged turian tech during the war and then from black-market purchases out of the Terminus Systems. A company, called OPI Technologies, decided to create its own version of a hardsuit suited to humans since they combined the qualities of armour and Haz-Mat/EVA suits. The company bribed several high ranking UNSC personnel to get the contract but their product proved insufficient. Their follow up, 'The Victor', fared little better and the company lost the contract. Later going bankrupt over it. Aldrin Labs took over making armour for Marines and Army personnel. The hardsuits they produce, the Onyx and Hydra, draw on the BDU for inspiration with layers of ceramics, metal plating and recoil/heat absorbing gel layers. By 2783, the outbreak of the Eden Prime War, human shields are at about 83% the power of turian shields but the armour of the hardsuit itself is close to two and a half times that of the turian suits. This makes humans the second toughest soldiers, after Krogan, to down in firefights.

The only troops still in BDUs are the Orbital Drop Shock Troops. Their suits are near identical to the design used during the Human/Covenant War with the only changes being an updating to VISR and newer Energy Shields being included.

{More info on hardsuits and ODS BDUs can be found in the CODEX thread}

Magazine Fed, Gas Operated Guns VS. Mass Accelerator Weapons

Some people argued that adapting these guns was 'dumb' **{One person bitched pretty hard} **but the reasons the UNSC switched over are as follows. Mass Accelerators use internal blocks of metal for ammo, each block is uniform across all weapons, and can provide between 5,000 and 10,000 rounds depending on the specifics of the weapon firing them. This offers several advantages in the eyes of UNSC top brass. Firstly, it reduces the carry weight a soldier has as s/he has no need to carry additional magazines. Secondly not needing to reload reduces the risk of jamming, especially for newer soldiers under fire, and the risk of overheating forces all troops to practice good trigger discipline. Thirdly, while a Mass Accelerator weapon is more

to build the cost saved by not having to produce billions of rounds regularly more than covers it.

UNSC weapons still fit the same mould as their earlier versions, literally as Misriah Armory just adapted the production lines to install the ammo blocks and mass accelerators. At the time of the Shanxi War the weapons were less effective, early models that had only just replaced the older versions as standard. By 2783 the weapons perform on-par if not better than the older versions with rate of fire and DPS matching or surpassing older weapons. Human weapons in comparison to Citadel weapons stand out for their durability. While salarian weapons tend to deal more damage of fire more rounds before overheating they tend to be susceptible to malfunctioning and Asari weapons tend to be more comfortable to carry and have less recoil but tend to fall down in either damage or 'magazine' size. Humanity is known for being able to beat a krogan to death with a rifle butt and then fire like it was nothing ****{this is canon in Halo to a degree for the assault rifle, which is built to take ungodly damage and still work fine}****. This ruggedness and general simplicity allows humanity to equip their troops with mass produced weapons and deploy anywhere, in any conditions, with consistent weapon performance.

Misriah Armory is not the only human weapons manufacturer, but they are the ones with the contract to supply the UNSC. Other manufacturers such as Hahne-Kedar, Kassa Fabrication and Rosenkov Materials are permitted to manufacture and sell a wide range of semi and fully automatic weapons to the public, providing strict record keeping and set limits are maintained. While these privately owned weapons are not as robust or powerful as Misriah Armory's weapons they still hold to the simple and durable design standards.

****{A brief overview of all standard UNSC weaponry is listed in the CODEX thread}****

Ballistic Weapons VS. Directed Energy Weapons

The biggest limitation to humanity developing plasma weaponry is resources. Human controlled space simply lacks large enough quantities of specific minerals and metals used by the Former Covenant races to build their weapons. These resources unfortunately play a vital role in allowing troop portable weapons to generate and direct the superheated plasma. This lack of resources, added to Sangheili unwillingness to provide the resources since that would weaken their own military, greatly hampered humanity's research ****{Loss of ONI, and the data it possessed, didn't help either}****. However the sangheili have little to know use for Eezo and their worlds have several untapped, naturally occurring, veins of Eezo which they are willing to provide humanity with in exchange for a commitment of troops to battling the Jiralhanae Empire and assisting the sangheili in achieving complete agricultural and industrial self-sufficiency ****{More will be touched on in the section on Human/Sangheili relations}****. ******Humanity does have one useable, infantry operated, plasma weapon. The P94 Energy Caster, which works more like a flamethrower than a rifle, is tricky to use effectively and poses a risk to the user. It is employed as an Anti-Flood weapon and assigned to members of a special group nicknamed The Blackwatch whose job is to search human space and protect it from the Flood.

The M6 Grindell/Galilean Nonlinear Rifle, Spartan Laser, is no longer made as an infantry weapon **{Same reason as marines didn't get Energy Shields} **but is instead manufactured as M8C Grindell/Galilean Nonlinear Cannon. The M8C is mounted onto vehicles and used as a high power anti-armour weapon. Ship mounted versions, called a M10G Nonlinear Battery, serve as humanity's version of GUARDIAN Lasers. For ship mounted plasma weaponry there is the XJZ11 Nonlinear Pulse Cannon. The XJZ11, commonly referred to as the Surtr Cannon, is based on long term study of former Covenant vessels and the Energy Projector that served as the main weapon of these ships. The weapon generates and expels a massive burst of superheated plasma which, even if it fails to make contact with the enemy hull, can potentially cripple an enemy vessel. The amount of heat radiated by the plasma when it impacts an enemy vessel's shields is enough to warp the metal hull and possibly result in compromised bulkheads.

UNSC Vessels

When the turian patrol discovered Shanxi and reported in, they noted a collection of ships ranging in length from 150m to about 600m. The turians assumed, based on their own ship sizes, these to be the bulk of humanity's frigates and cruisers. As such, when this rather small fleet was destroyed the turians presumed the human navy was gone. As such when the Fifth Fleet emerged from Slipspace it caught the token force left to oversee the pacification of Shanxi completely off guard. 150m turian frigates found themselves being battered by their cruiser sized human counterparts, TriFire cannons pounding their shields apart. Turian cruisers found themselves going toe to toe with destroyers, heavily armed and armoured human frigates which had traded speed and manoeuvrability for sheer staying and stopping power. The human's Dreadnought sized cruisers each let off a single XJZ11 shot before moving towards the planet's service, intending to deploy their companies of ODSTs and Marines.

Following the Treaty of Taetrus, a council brokered ceasefire which saw the release of all prisoners and the return of all captured territory, the turians had a chance to step back and simply look at the human vessels. Working with translation programs and studying data from the numerous battles of the Shanxi War the turians provided the following comparison between their own vessel classifications and humanity's:

Â• Corvette: Turian/Relay Race 90-100 metres in length â€" Human 150 metres in length

Â• Frigate: Turian/Relay Race 150 metres in length â€" Human 470-570 metres in length

Â• Destroyers: Turian/Relay Race **No Version **â€" Human 480-580 metres in length

Â• Light Cruiser: Turian/Relay Race **No Version **â€" Human 1,170 metres in length

Â• Cruiser: Turian/Relay Race 500-700 metres in length â€" Human 1,192 metres in length

Â• Heavy Cruiser: Turian/Relay Race **No Version **â€" Human 1,425 metres in length

Â• Super Heavy Cruiser: Turian/Relay Race **No Version **â€" Human 1,518 metres in length

Â• Dreadnought: Turian/Relay Race 900-1,600 metres in length â€" Human **No Version**

Â• Carrier: Turian/Relay Race 1,900 metres in length â€" Human 3,000 metres in length

The Shanxi War saw the first real defeat in battle the turians had suffered since the early days of their involvement in the Krogan Rebellions. The war revealed that while the turians had the largest Navy anywhere in Relay Space, they did not have the strongest. Human vessels were larger, more heavily armed [although each individual mass Accelerator was weaker than a turian one the use of TriFire cannons compensated for it] and had significantly thicker hulls which meant even when their shields fell the ship could still take fire without being destroyed outright.

Human vessels are armed with the following weapons, depending on size:

Â• M10G Nonlinear Batteries. The numbers vary depending on size of vessel, these laser weapons are employed as part of every ship's Point Defence System. The lasers move at light speed, they cannot be dodged by anything moving at subluminal speeds. Unless the beam is aimed poorly, it will always hit its target. In the early stages of a battle, GARDIAN fire is 100% accurate. It is not 100% lethal, but it doesn't have to be. Damaged fighters must break off for repairs.

Â• 50mm point-defence guns. These massive automatic turrets are fired in between shots from the M10G batteries. Not as fast moving, nor as powerful, these weapons function best by sending a wall of projectiles at oncoming fighters or missiles forcing hostiles to redirect or be ripped apart by high velocity rounds. Larger vessels sport a considerably larger number.

Â• Archer missile pods. Ship-to-ship missiles carried by UNSC capital ships for engaging enemy warships in space combat. UNSC ships usually carry large numbers of them, their sheer numbers making up for their underperformance against both kinetic and Energy shielding. Against unshielded hulls however, Archer missiles can be deadly. Each pod consists of thirty missiles, all of which are fired at their target simultaneously with on-board targeting plotting erratic courses to prevent chain detonation should one missile be taken down by enemy defences.

Â• Vishnu -class Nuclear Missiles. A starship and starfighter-launched thermonuclear weapon used by the UNSC. The Vishnu can be outfitted with various payloads and explosive yields. UNSC forces only use nuclear weapons, such as the Vishnu, when human forces are severely outnumbered, and/or tactical situations that demand the use of such weapons. **{The Vishnu-Class missile is a newer iteration of the Covenant War era Shiva nuclear missiles. The name of this version was chosen in reference to Oppenheimer's quoting of the the Bhagavad-Gita}**

Â• TriFire Mass Accelerator Cannons. Three linked Mass Accelerators, each capable of propelling a twenty kilo slug at 1.3% the speed of

light which share targeting and firing sequences. Each slug impacts with the force of 48 kilotons TNT and while each slug is weaker than the UNSC's earlier Magnetic Accelerator Cannons the drain on power and fire rate from earlier MACs made continuous usage during firefights next to impossible. The number of cannons varies depending on vessel size with frigates having only one while the large Super Heavy Cruisers possess four cannons plus the devastating XJZ11.

• XJZ11 Nonlinear Pulse Cannon. A single, high powered, direct energy weapon so large it can only be mounted to cruisers. This weapon, while unable to deliver a continuous stream of energy unlike the former Covenant's Energy Projector, is able to cripple if not outright destroy any non-Dreadnought vessel fielded by the Relay Races. The superheated, super charged plasma generated and collected by the cannon is fired via innovative use of eezo fuelled Mass Accelerators at close to 1% the speed of light.

• Disruptor torpedoes. Eezo loaded torpedoes which create random and unstable mass effect fields when triggered. These fields warp space-time in a localized area. The rapid asymmetrical mass changes cause the target to rip itself apart. A new addition to the UNSC's arsenal, these weapons are regarded as cheap to manufacture and readily disposable due to humanity's access to large scale, pure Eezo mines scattered throughout both the former Covenant space and newly colonised systems.

To protect their ships humanity makes use of both old and new methods. Up to ten metres of Titanium-50 alloy, which was specifically toughened at the molecular level, and kinetic barriers fed by massive central batteries. While humanity had experimented with using reverse engineered Covenant energy shields on their ships the issue of firing through the shields, which required a portion of the shield to be dropped to allow the projectiles to pass through them, proved problematic. The development of kinetic barriers, which block incoming but not outgoing fire, saw the prothean derived technology win out. To compensate for their shields being comparably weaker than Relay Race versions, and not as effective as Energy Shields, human vessels often come with backup batteries to allow for instant reactivation of shields. Depending on the size of the vessel humans can immediately reactivate their shields, to a limited percentage of total effectiveness, multiple times.

UNSC

The United Nations Space Command Defense Force is the military, exploratory, and scientific agency of the Unified Earth Government. While the UNSC had all but taken complete control of every facet of human government during the Human/Covenant war, either through voluntary passing of power or the effective dismantling of democratic rule throughout the colonies, the outcry over atrocities committed during the suppression of Dark Worlds and the details unearthed during investigation into the White Scandal saw increased civilian oversight which led to the eventual recreation of the United Earth Government and a return to democratic rule. The UNSC's military arm, the UNCSCDF, is split into four major branches.

• The UNSC Navy is the branch of the UNCSCDF responsible mostly for naval operations in space, though they sometimes operate in the oceans with their terrestrial arm. Its roles include ship-to-ship combat, orbital bombardment, the deployment of atmospheric and space

fighters, and the delivery of UNSC Marines, especially ODSs, into combat. The UNSC Navy is the largest branch of the UNSCDF and arguably the most important. The Navy is vital in protecting trade and enforcing UEG control across all human space while also being the primary protector against alien aggression. While the Navy is not the largest active in Relay Space, that belongs to the turians, it is the most powerful with ships designed and armed to clash against the power of the Jiralhanae Empire. With vessels ranging from a hundred or so metres to over three kilometres long the UNSC Navy is a force that all, former Covenant and Relay Race alike, are hesitant to antagonise.

Â. The UNSC Air Force is an aerial division of the UNSC Defense Force (UNSCDF) along with the UNSC Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. The UNSC Air Force serves as an aerial defence and support force, primarily deploying from UNSC Navy vessels or from terrestrial airbases. Piloting everything from the latest state-of-the-art Broadsword broadswords to the older but invaluable Albatross, plus everything in between, the pilots of the UNSC Air Force play a key role in the deployment and support of the UNSCDF's primary offensive branch the UNSC Marine Corps.

Â. The UNSC Marine Corps is a branch of the UNSCDF that is responsible for land-based military operations, as well as the protection of Naval vessels and installations from attack. A rugged and diverse assortment of well-equipped and well trained men and women, one of the Marine Corps' most notable conflicts was fighting against the Covenant's highly superior technology and numbers. Drawing on many military traditions from Earth's history the Corps is the most diversified branch of the UNSCDF with regiments that can trace their deployment history as far back as pre-colonisation of stellar bodies. Years upon years of bloody warfare and harsh training conditions have shaped all marines into lethally efficient killers. While it is generally accepted that the Turian Hierarchy has the most disciplined army of any race operating in Relay Space, with the Asari boasting the most experienced, the UNSC Marine Corps strikes that ideal of numbers and experience. **{Turian grunt is better trained, human vet is better skilled and much more experienced due to a lack of active wars the turians are involved in}. **

Â. The UNSC Army is a branch of the UNSCDF, primarily responsible for land-based military operations. They deploy primarily from pre-established bases located on a planet's surface as opposed to the Navy vessels that the other branches of the UNSCDF deploy from. The 'shield' to the Marine Corps 'sword' the Army is charged with protecting all UEG aligned colonies, installations and bases from both foreign and domestic attack. It was thanks to the Army garrison stationed on Shanxi that, although the garrison was all but destroyed, allowed the colony to hold out against the devastating turian attempts at pacification.

Penal Squads

While the idea of sending convicted criminals out as the first wave in battle has existed for centuries the UNCS never officially employed this tactic during the Human/Covenant War. While prisoners were released and armed on several occasions to aid in the defence of colonies it was not until after the war, when the UNSC was attempting to regain control of planets which had seceded from UEG control under cover of the war. Faced with the daunting task of taking these

planets, which had avoided the horror and drain of a prolonged war, back to wheel with a greatly exhausted military the decision was made to offer imprisoned insurrectionists a choice; Having explosives implanted into their bodies as insurance and be sent off to fight or face the firing squad. Only a few accepted. Better luck was had with the criminals and political dissidents the insurrectionists had imprisoned. These men and women, bitter and angry at those who had imprisoned them, relished the chance to exact revenge on those like their jailers and gladly took the deal. Nicknamed the Devil Dogs, in reference to a no longer used slang term for Marines, the first incarnation of the Penal Squads were brutal. Promised their freedom in exchange for a set time of service, with rumours of time off for high bodycounts, the criminals tore a bloody path through any and all opposition. By the end of the Dark World Wars many insurrectionist groups would surrender rather than risk having the Devil Dogs massacre them and their families.

The Penal Squads have undergone several major overhauls since those dark days. Now the system serves as a feeder program, preventing members of the numerous street gangs that plague human cities from entering the prison system where they can hone their illicit skills under the eyes of more experienced inmates. Special schemes, geared towards education and upskilling, within the Penal System are common as a way of providing a better chance for the criminals upon release. For those who wish to remain in the military the option to transfer into the Marine Corps with a rank befitting their service record is available. Those who show potential are even offered an Officer Aptitude Evaluation, which allows them to fast-track their way towards becoming commissioned officers. In recent years the UNSC has offered service in the Penal Squads as a means for citizens of Independent Colonies to earn UEG citizenship.

'Dogs of War'

Following the conquest of the Skyllian Verge humanity was left with thousands of batarians living in their territory. As they had assigned the batarians the same rights as civilians they soon had combat trained, but otherwise unskilled, batarians applying to serve in Penal Squads as a way of obtaining full citizenship. While this was allowed on a trial basis the number of 'friendly fire' accidents soon led to the UNSC segregating the batarians. A reshuffling of the Penal Squads soon after led to the batarians and Independent Colonists being assigned to separate squads from the common criminals.

A misreporting of these batarian soldiers caused many to presume humanity was offering contracts to alien mercenaries and resulting in many adventurous asari and more rebellious turians applying for employment. Mixing these mercenaries in with the batarians and humans seeking citizenship led to the passing of the Special Task Force XI Act and a swell of xeno-mercs being sent to face the jiralhanae. Their primary nickname comes from an attempt of humour by a sangheili general quoting Shakespeare.

{I don't intend to go into too much detail since I have plans for a possible side story that follows a batarian, and several other Xeno-mercs, fighting against the jiralhanae. If/When this story gets going I'll have more info for them then}

Dark Worlds and Independent Colonies

The original Dark Worlds were a scattered group of planets on which Insurrectionists claimed power during the Human-Covenant War. Falsifying reports that indicated the planets had been decimated by the Covenant and suppressing any and all outgoing signals the Insurrectionists banked on the UNSC being too preoccupied with the war to register their disappearance. They were right, for the most part as the UNSC never suspected that entire colonies worth of resources and weapons existed hidden out there. These colonies were able to remain hidden and flourish for some time before survey vessels, dispatched to assess the devastation and lay groundwork for memorials, discovered their existence. What followed was, and forever shall be the worst crimes ever committed against humanity by humanity. Criminals allowed free reign in 'dealing with' resistance, Marine Corps officers turning a blind eye to the atrocities and all done in the name of a unified humanity. When the Army, who was following behind to oversee the garrisoning of the colonies, came across the slaughter the UNSC faced a full blown mutiny. The risk of losing control of the Army, coupled with shifting public opinion as images and reports of the carnage leaked out, forced the UNSC to crack down on the Penal Squads and Marines. The horrors of the Dark World Wars contributed to HIGHCOMM handing power back to the UEG, citing the dehumanising effects of the war as why they could no longer lead. Today there are no real Dark Worlds, the term existing mainly as an insult to Independent Colonies and as a warning to planets on the verge of rebellion.

Unlike rebellions on colonies, which are met with brutal and immediate retaliation, the formation of Independent Colonies by groups wishing to live outside UEG governing is accepted. The reason for this is that while rebellions on UEG worlds means the loss of investment, of time and resources to establish the colony, an independent colony has all costs and difficulties covered by the settlers. Another, more practical, reason is that allowing those who would reject the UEG government leave means they don't have to be bothered with. Independent Colonies are often formed as communes based around ideological or religious systems the UEG refusing to accommodate. Independent Colonies however are completely ignored by UNSC patrols, which makes them prime targets for raiders and slavers along humanity's borders. Some critics have noted this exposure to attack often pressures the Independents into eventually accepting UEG rule in exchange for the protection the UNSC offers, effectively granting the UEG a ready to develop colony without the initial start-up cost. Citizens of independent colonies can apply to return to the UEG, as civilians. UEG civilians are unable to vote or hold public office and have further restrictions on careers they may follow. Agreeing to serve time in a Penal Squad, and surviving it, grants full citizenship.

The Office Of Naval Intelligence And Its Successors

The Office of Naval Intelligence was the reason humanity survived their war with the Covenant. Its manipulating of facts to maintain morale, its acquiring and reverse-engineering of alien technology and the horrific crimes it committed to safeguard humanity ensured human survival. These details, or at least what little was publically known about them, meant that ONI grew in power and influence after the war. However the corrupting influence of power, and extreme paranoia, led to several risky actions following the war. The arming of Servants of Abiding Truth and fuelling of the Sangheili Civil War being a major

example.

For many years ONI remained the true power in the UNSC, using black-ops and False Flag operations to sabotage any progress towards a return to democracy or any weakening of their influence. But all this ended when one low level data analyst was assigned high clearance by a clerical error. Stumbling onto secret reports detailing the origins of the Spartan-IIs, and the difficulties ONI was facing in establishing a new generation, data analyst Eric White leaked the information to the public. While ONI was able to discredit the information as slander and Insurrectionist propaganda a failed assassination attempt on White prompted HIGHCOMM to launch a full-scale investigation into ONI. This investigation led to the military police, supported by ODSs, raiding many of ONI's bases. What they found was empty bases, littered with the corpses of low level ONI operative, and empty data stores. Admiral Parangosky, head of ONI, was killed while 'attempting to resist arrest' when MPs moved on her private residence **{Conspiracy theories exist that Parangosky was killed on orders from HIGHCOMM to ensure she did not go to trial and give damning evidence against them}**. On her person was a datapad which had been used to relay a message to all ONI personnel. The word 'Tartarus'.

For some time after ONI disappeared the UNSC was hesitant to risk a repeat. As such intelligence groups were set up and disbanded on an as needed basis. While this ensured no group could become as powerful as ONI had been it also greatly limited the effectiveness of the groups' intelligence gathering capabilities. Eventually the UNSC did establish a permanent intelligence agency, the Naval Intelligence Division, The NID was to be partly under civilian oversight, to provide the morality many career military had been forced to sacrifice to survive the Covenant War, and was under constant scrutiny by a committee comprised of HIGHCOMM officials and UEG investigators. While nowhere near as effective an intelligence agency as ONI had been, the NID is effective enough to gather and supply effective data through a network of spies, remote drones and deep cover agents scattered across UEG territory and beyond.

For nearly fifty years following ONI's disappearance the UNSC refused to replace either its intelligence gathering or its R&D divisions for fear of a repeat. Short term task forces, established to work on a single issue before being dissolved, were used instead. This paranoia, coupled with the loss of the decades of research data ONI had amassed, is believed to have stunted human technological development by close to a century if not more. However, when construction work in Mars' southern region discovered previously unknown alien technology a more permanent group was needed to accurately study the new technology. This group slowly expanded to encompass all UNSC funded research, with each new duty bringing more and more scrutiny to prevent abuse. Eventually the group was turned into the Department of Research and Development, DRD. While the DRD now studies any and all alien technology its primary objective is the study, reverse-engineering and improvement of Mass Accelerator technology. A task which became infinitely easier once the Terminus Systems' black market was discovered. Using humanity's vast resources to procure weapons and armour the DRD studied, dismantled, studied, reassembled and studied the equipment as a means to bridge the gap between humanity and the Relay Races.

The Shanxi War

A nine month long war between the Turian Hierarchy and the UNSC **{Canonical First Contact War lasted three months, and saw a little over a thousand casualties total}**. The name comes from its main event, the Siege of Shanxi, where the turian military spent the six months it took the UNSC to fortify the surrounding systems and gear up for Total War trying to take what they thought was the human homeworld. The fighting was so intense, and the human resistance so fierce, that the turians were forced to use safe camps and their hastatim execution squads, which have only ever been needed against the turians themselves. When the UNSC relieved Shanxi the planet's garrison of UNSC Army soldiers had suffered near total destruction and the civilian population had been cut nearly in half but resistance was still strong.

While the turians held the advantage in ground combat, better technology and access to biotics allowing them to inflict massive casualties, they were unable to deal with many of humanity's tactics. Moves such as ditching shields, whose energy signatures can be tracked, to allow for ambushes, and turning the weapons of fallen turians against them were things the turians never considered in battle. The human use of IEDs, either simple shrapnel bombs or the more advanced 'thermite surprises', made foot patrols incredibly risky while the armour piercing capabilities of most human weapons limited the effectiveness of turian APCs. The level of resistance and brutal attacking prowess of the humans led general Desolas Arterius to christen the humans 'Nodra Krogatz', the 'Next Krogan' **{this is the turian's scientific name for humanity like how our own scientific name for human is 'Homo Sapiens Sapiens' or 'Wise Man Wise'}**.

When the UNSC Navy arrived and decimated the turian ships above Shanxi the turians initially thought they were under attack by another race, of whom the humans must have been a client race. This was due to the sheer size of human vessels and their use of plasma weaponry. Ship mounted easily predicting the turian tactics, and a considerably thicker hull, meant that turians could not match the enemy vessels in battle unless they had a significant numerical advantage.

While it is rarely mentioned, many observers believe that had the Council not stepped in the turians would have ultimately lost. The use of Slipspace, plus their atomic and plasma, weaponry meant that humanity have simply 'Glassed' the turian worlds and moved on without needing to ever engage in ground battles where they were at the disadvantage.

**{I don't intend to go into too much detail since I am considering telling the story of the Shanxi War either through flashbacks by characters who were there as an independent side story} **

****Alien Races****

Sangheili

A bipedal race hailing from Sanghelios the sangheili here one of the two founding races of the Covenant Religion, in which they served as the primary military caste. Physically superior to humans, and possessing technology well beyond anything the humans can develop, the sangheili battled against the UNSC for the majority of the Human-Covenant War. Following their betrayal by Prophets, and the

schism in the Covenant, the sangheili fought alongside humanity to end the empire they had formed. Following the war centuries old grievances and difficulty adjusting to existence outside of the Covenant's caste system led to a Civil War. When ONI's involvement in the Civil War was revealed the tension between the sangheili and humanity boiled over culminating in the Isstvan massacre, where a sangheili fleetmaster refused to render aid to the UNSC's Third Fleet which was attempting to 'break the back' of jiralhanae power.

During the near century of isolation which followed the sangheili found themselves struggling to adapt and survive the massive social changes they were undergoing as well as steady and aggressive attacks by the jiralhanae. Under pressure from the numerically superior jiralhanae the sangheili were forced to end their acceptance of the status quo and begin innovating with weaponry. Much like humanity the prolonged war led to rapid advancement with weapons like the T-55 Directed Energy 'Storm' Rifle being developed. By the time dialogue was re-established with humanity the sangheili vastly overpowered the jiralhanae in terms of weapons and shielding but lacked the numbers to fight aggressively. Bartering access to older weapons systems, and mineral rights to resources not vital to sangheili interests, in exchange for assistance with agriculture and military support the sangheili have since reclaimed all their former territory and begun taking planets from the jiralhanae.

Interaction between the sangheili and the Citadel Council has mostly been limited **{suspected to be a deliberate action by humanity to prevent Relay Races bartering aid in exchange for technology} **with only one official meeting between representatives, a meeting brokered by humanity. The sangheili seemed to show some measure of respect for the turians, information gleaned from humanity about the Shanxi War having shown the turians to be a powerful and effective military force. The sangheili interaction with the other diplomats was not as good, the representative showing little interest in the asari delegate's words and found the salarian's dalatrass highly condescending. Other than this one meeting the sangheili only ever really see Relay Race species when human hired mercenaries support Penal Squads during joint-ops against the jiralhanae.

Jiralhanae

Following the dissolution of the Human-Sangheili alliance in 2563 the jiralhanae tribes found themselves with time to recover and regroup. Due to their tribal government and less time in the Covenant's caste system the jiralhanae adapted to life without the Covenant faster, uniting under a new and powerful Chieftain of the Jiralhanae. This chieftain then sent his fleets to capture and secure the homeworlds of the other former Covenant races, providing him with the resources and military force needed to begin expanding jiralhanae control.

The jiralhanae are currently locked in a brutal war against the humans and sangheili while simultaneously using garrisons and the threat of Glassing to suppress rebellions from the other races within their 'empire'. They have had no contact with the Relay Races and where it not for the Dogs of War it would be possible they are would not even aware of the existence of such races.

Turian

An avian race hailing from Palaven, the turians have served as the military power behind the Citadel Council ever since their involvement in ending the Krogan Rebellions. Possessing the largest standing army, and allowed the largest amount of dreadnoughts under the Treaty of Farixen, the Turian Hierarchy has filled the role of Peacekeeper for over a millennium. The turians where the first Relay Race to encounter humanity, and the only Relay Race to declare war against the UEG. The Shanxi War, named for the planet the majority of the war was fought on, lasted for a total of nine months and saw some of the most intense and bloody battles the Hierarchy had partaken in for centuries.

Following the Council brokered treaty, signed above the occupied turian world of Taetrus, the turians found themselves forced to play buffer between the rest of the Citadel Races and this new race. When talks aimed at bringing humanity into the galactic community broke down, humanity's refusal to bow to pre-existing treaties and salarian attempts to steal classified data being the primary reasons, a solo attempt at talks by the turians fares much better but still fails. The decision to release the designs for what humans would later call HOLOPADs by the turians as a good-will gesture aids in a second round of talks which secures a Non-Aggression Agreement between the Hierarchy and UEG. Since then the two governments had signed minor trade agreements while their respective militaries have occasionally run joint operations against Terminus System pirates and slave raiders who operated along the border areas.

The Shanxi War showed the turians, and Relay Races at large, that while the turians may possess the largest military they did not have the most powerful fighting force. Their soldiers lacked the experience and instincts that only long-term combat can provide, their ground forces only winning thanks to superior numbers and hardware. This insight into their shortcomings has led to an increasing number of cases where the turians adopt a more active approach to dealing with Terminus pirates as a way to increase the experience of their troopers. The way also showed several flaws in their ship construction techniques, namely in the inability of the hull or the shield generators to handle extreme temperatures. Joint research with the Salarian Union saw the turians attempt to counter these issues by perfecting Cyclonic Barrier Technology (CBT). By rotationally firing their mass effect field projectors ships create rapidly oscillating kinetic barriers instead of static ones a CTB equipped ship should be able to deflect the plasma generated by XJZ11 instead of just stopping the plasma, allowing it to 'sit' atop their shields and radiate out enough heat to compromise the ship's hull beneath. Thankfully, for all concerned, the turians have never tested this theory as the peace between the Hierarchy and the UEG still holds.

Interesting Note the Flood is unable to infect the turians due to their dextro-amino acid nature.

Asari

A humanoid, mammalian species the asari where the first race of the current cycle to discover the Citadel. Believing in negotiation over battle the asari are often regarded as a race of scholars and diplomats. Possessing a robust cellular regenerative system the average asari can live up to one thousand years, discounting illness or injury. A race of natural biotics the asari military, while small

in comparison to the likes of say the turian military, is one to be feared and respected. Due to their potentially millennium long lifetime the biotic commandos the Asari Republics send against their enemies are regarded as some of the most dangerous soldiers in the known galaxy.

The asari first learned of the existence of humanity in the final weeks of the Shanxi War, when the Turian Hierarchy began to pull all peacekeeping troops back and started to gear for Total War. Working with the Salarian Union the asari discovered that the turians were engaged in a brutal and bloody war against a paradoxically technologically inferior/superior race. Rushing to intervene the asari flagship, the Will of Thessia, managed to enter the Mactare system just before what would be the final battle of the war. The arrival of the dreadnought inadvertently broke the stalemate that had developed between humanity's Fifth Fleet and the assembled turian armada **{Both races mistook it as the first arrival of turian reinforcements}**. In the ensuing battle the asari struggled to get both sides to stand down as the Will of Thessia took considerable damage. The battle was finally stopped when on-board salarian agents managed to hack the turian COMMS system and retrieve all gathered linguistic data preluding to humanity.

When humanity finally agreed to a permanent ceasefire, as increased jiralhanae activity had them concerned about attempting to fight on two massive fronts, the asari went ahead with what they felt was the next logical step, inducting humanity as a Council associate race. These talks failed when humanity straight up refused to downsize its fleet to match the Treaty of Farixen, on the grounds that they needed their fleets strong to fight the jiralhanae, and their utter refusal to even consider accepting the Citadel's restrictions/ban on . When humanity walked away from the talks it was with no form of treaty or agreement between the UEG and the Asari Republics **{This has since changed, with small-scale trade between the space ports of Shanxi and Illium}. **While several Matriarchs used to rapid changes and uncertainty that the discovery of humanity, and its powerful military, caused to push for a more militarised asari their electronic democracy saw these 'warhawks' outvoted by those who chose to see humanity as potential trader partners and possible mates. as such the asari military has seen little to no change following humanity's appearance on their radar, save the adoption of carriers.

Salarian

The salarians are a warm-blooded amphibian race that serve as the technical experts of the Council, providing both cutting edge technology and near constant intelligence gathered from just about every source possible. Officially the Salarian Union became aware of humanity at the same time as the asari but their constant infiltration of turian channels means they most likely knew about the younger race much sooner.

Always needing to be at the pinnacle of technological ability the salarians have the most hostile relationship with humanity, unhappy at humanity's refusal to provide the details of their plasma weaponry or the secrets of Slipspace travel. The UNSC's counterintelligence agency is constantly uncovering salarian cyber-warfare incursions which are capable of penetrating all but A.I encoded encryptions. The salarians, simply practicing what they do on every race while hiding

behind their mutual defence treaty with the turians, are constantly forced to declare any STG taskforces discovered as 'having gone rogue' to avoid the full extent of humanity's retaliation.

The salarians are the only Council Race without any form of trade with humanity, all products going either are purchased second-hand from turian retailers with the relevant licenses. They are also the race who is most vocal about taking humanity into line with Council laws, the outlawing of and distributing of technological data retrieved from both the Prothean runs on Mars and humanity's independent development.

Other Relay Races

The volus benefit from all trade agreements humanity has with the Hierarchy due to their status as a 'client race'. The hanar and drell have some minor trade with humanity, via the turians, but it is rather limited. The elcor, whose products are not all too useful to humans, have no exports to humanity but to import a notable amount of high-grade palladium and iridium produced by human companies.

Batarian

The turians first became aware of humanity following the Shanxi War but did not make first contact until sometime later when humanity, with a higher population growth rate and more effective terraforming techniques, began advancing into the Skyllian Verge. While the batarians tried to have the Council declare the region of 'batarian interest' in an attempt to prevent human expansion the fact that the UEG/UNSC was not a Citadel Race meant any declaration would just be ignored. Angered by the Council's refusal to assist the Hegemony closed its embassy and decided to fund and arm pirates and slavers from the Terminus Systems in the hopes of making the humans think the Verge was too hostile to bother with.

This policy backfired spectacularly in 2778 when humanity raided the slaver based on Torfan. Uncovering damning evidence that the Hegemony was using its colonies in the Verge to finance attacks on human worlds, both UEG and Independent, the UNSC was sent to 'secure human interests in the region and end possible dangers to human expansion.' On July 7th 2778 the batarians received an uncoded message warning that they should have 'let sleeping dogs lie' and an official announcement that humanity intended to annex all of the Skyllian Verge. In a series of Slipspace attacks the UNSC broke the back of the batarian military and forced them back to the Kite's Nest cluster. Hundreds of thousands of batarians were left behind on their occupied planets at the tender 'mercy' of a race they had been informed were monstrous. Humanity offered a simple choice to all batarians in the Verge, remain on your worlds as civilians of the UEG **{Effectively making them no different to Independent Colonists who returned to UEG space} **or be transported to the Kite's Nest and return to Hegemony governance. Almost 100% of the lower castes chose to remain while close to 70% of the upper caste members fled. Many former batarian military and state police officers now serve in the Penal Squads, using a loophole that allows them to earn full citizenship just like Independent Colonists can.

The Batarian Hegemony, their military all but destroyed by human assaults in the Verge or desertion, now find itself too busy trying

to protect their remaining worlds from attack by the very pirates and slavers it had once funded and supplied.

Krogan

Humanity and the krogan have never officially made first contact due to the krogan lacking any form of unified government the UEG can deal with. The distances between their territories, and that krogan territory is in the middle of a DMZ, being the main cause for this. Humanity is aware of them due to encounters with the Blood Pack, and later mercenaries hired to fight for humanity, and generally holds a 'case-by-case' opinion of the race.

The same information mostly holds true for the vorchas as well.

Geth

Despite multiple attempts to contact the synthetic race humanity has not made first contact with them. Almost all attempts have resulted in their signals being ignored, a single reply of 'begone' was received once. While humanity, and their AIs, have considerable interest in meeting the geth the foreseeable future see no contact between the two races.

Quarian

Humanity first made contact with the quarians in 2765 when several quarian scout ships enter a human controlled system. After a tense first encounter where humanity threatened to destroy the ships if they did not relocate, as they had entered the system in the coordinates the sangheili used for emerging from Slipspace, the two races managed less than two hours of diplomatic talks before quarian bias against AIs led to humanity simply telling them to go away. Now standard policy is for the Migrant Fleet to announce itself before entering human territory, be provided an armed escort away from any potential Slipspace Exit points and sent on their way.

Some quarians, mostly those on pilgrimage, can be seen on humanity's outer colonies working and providing technical advice for money. A much smaller number elect to serve as mercenaries in human employment, being sent to act as combat engineers alongside Penal Squads against the jiralhanae for large sums of credits.

Interesting Note the Flood is unable to infect the quarians due to their dextro-amino acid nature.

**Original Characters Of Note Who Will Be Mentioned In Background Talk Or In The Dogs Of War Side Story **

Wotanizus

A minor jiralhanae chieftain who earned his position by killing his former commander. A young nephew of the Chief of all Jiralhanae Wotanizus has vision and an intense desire to find out the source of humanity's new technology and use it to further strengthen the Jiralhanae Empire. A rarity amongst his race, Wotanizus believes defeat can be more beneficial than victory if you learn from it and refuses to punish defeated sub-commanders if they fail. Respected by

the jiralhanae under his command, and beloved by the unggoy, Wotanizus will do whatever he feels will most benefit his people.

Joww Bal'serah

A lower caste batarian biotic who trained in the special intervention unit, batarian special forces. Born on Camala he and his family remained when humanity offered the chance to leave or stay. Fighting to earn full citizenship, and so his wages will pay for his sibling's education, Joww is a brutal and effective shock trooper. His call sign of 'Spike' comes from his use of a jiralhanae Type-25 Carbine in place of a standard issue ICW. **{ An Early version appeared in a short scene in chapter 18 of Chaos in the Cosmos}**

Weyrloc Grawl

An old and powerful krogan battlemaster, Grawl is the uncle of Chief Weyrloc Guld and one of the original krogan to take control of the Blood Pack from the vorchas. Old enough to remember the Rebellions Grawl has survived a millennium and a half of warfare by being the biggest, toughest and most dangerous thing on the battlefield. A beneficial genetic mutation has left Grawl a giant of a krogan, easily as large and as strong as a jiralhanae, the battlemaster earned his call sign of 'Hunter-Killer', or simply 'HK', by actively seeking out mgalekgolo to kill "For the challenge".

Vas Nedas

The quarian known as Vas Nedas, quarian for 'crew of nowhere', is a former quarian marine exiled for the attempted murder of an Admiral. Following his exile Vas Nedas has become loyal to the mission alone and will not hesitate to abandon his fellow soldiers if doing so will ensure the mission's success, he will not hesitate to sacrifice himself for the mission either. His call sign, Visor, refers both to the faceplate of his environment suit and the fact he has replaced the quarian programed VIs in his suit with a modified VISR. **{This guy is basically HUNK from Resident Evil, only with just two fingers and weird legs}.**

**XXXXX**

**And I'm ending this here because I don't want to double the word count of No Pease. Last wee bits are as follows:**

**Council opinions of humans is different to canon; Turians are supportive, asari are neutral and salarians are hostile.**

**ONI and their research was wiped out to prevent humanity being WAY too overpowered. ONI still exists, as the backers/real power behind Cerberus.**

**Covenant Remnants {Badguys from Halo 4} are still around but slightly different. Here they are a cult that opposes changes to sangheili ways and refuses to use newer technology, sticking to the older Covenant Era plasma rifles etc.**

_**{Not really in relation to the fic, but to my writing. Please note if something is marked by XX a location and then XX that is a scene change. If there is a " and then something like a date or a note

about time in there, that means there is a time difference between this event and whatever came before it! Pay attention to that, because this story will see flash-forwards and flashbacks as time goes on}**_

**This is Highvalour saying, hope this helped and if you**

**Got more questions post them on the forum.**

**I will answer and it saves repeats if people go there.**

6. Prologue Helljumper Training - Pt2

_Quick Glossary _

_ AESIR; Named for the Nordic gods of warfare and power these humanoid robotic drones serve as replacements to the dated and faulty LOKI mechs. Drawing on inspiration from the tales of the 'Morning War' and the victorious geth these drones are networked and each platoon is controlled remotely by specially designed AIs. These armoured golems are usually deployed on planets where long term organic troop deployment would prove too difficult logistically. Many are also used in Special Forces Training as their size, durability and physical capabilities allow them to serve as effective stand-ins for powerful Xeno species such as jiralhanae or krogan._

VANIR; Named for the Nordic gods of wisdom and agriculture the civilian version of the AESIR function as land workers and maintenance personal within hazardous locations. While primarily utilised by UNSC/UEG overseen farms or facilities some affluent citizens have begun to use them, finding the increased efficiency and output well worth the price of purchasing the advanced mechs.

_LOKI; Outdated and poorly coded mechs developed by humanity in the early 2700s. Their name, an acronym created from the names of the four man team who designed the LOKI, proved prophetic as the mechs poor coding [even when compared to the work of the less AI savvy Relay Races]often caused the machines to malfunction and turn on any around them. Now only seen on Independent Colonies or in the backrooms of Terminus System bazaars these cheap and expendable mechs are viewed by those who face them the same way krogan view vorchas in the Blood Pack. _

Another chapter, another attempt to entertain you all. I honestly do not have anything else to add, so on with the show!

Halo belongs to Microsoft Studios

Mass Effect belongs to belongs to Bioware

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XX Wreck Of The Ruthless Domination; Orbit Of Jupiter -2775 XX

The Ruthless Domination, an old scuttled jiralhanae vessel whose design dated back to the Human-Covenant War, had been recovered by the UNSC in 2743 following the brutal battle above the sangheili controlled Prospero. While the ship provided very little in the way

of new data, or the slow evolution of jiralhanae technology following the Covenant collapse, it did provide a useful venue for training UNSC forces for operations inside jiralhanae vessels... Training that could also prove useful should certain sangheili factions ever grow too powerful.

It was aboard the Ruthless Domination that the last series of tests would be carried out to determine the future for each of the ODST trainees. While it was or less a given that anyone still in the program was guaranteed to be made a Helljumper which battalion of the 105th Marine Expeditionary Unit they'd be assigned to. Only the very top of the graduates would even be considered for the 7th Shock Troops Battalion, traditionally the best of the best of the best. That was why every suit was wired with state of the art sensors to monitor the wearer's performance. Why the entire ship was rigged with hundreds upon hundreds of cameras streaming footage from a multitude of angles to the top strategists, data analysts and military veterans the UNSC had.

Eight teams, each consisting of four trainees, would be sent to board at different breach points. Each team had to successfully falsify access codes, move through the ship facing against AI controlled AESIR mechs and compete against each other to capture either a HVP or crucial data from the ship's bridge. The AESIR carried training weapons modelled after standard Jiralhanae Empire equipment, although with the lethality toned down, and were under the control of highly effective AIs whose sole purpose was to perfectly mimic the tactics jiralhanae security would employ to stop boarding parties.

Shepard's assault team was to gain access via one of the docking bays. While it meant they had the easiest access point they were also looking at some of the heaviest resistance once detected inside the ship. Fire team Charlie, team names having been plucked from the phonetic alphabet, was comprised of Shepard himself and three others.

Charlie-One, big guy who'd been assigned the CQB armour variant. Guy was designated leader for this mission. Shepard didn't know him, didn't know any of them actually. Everyone's IFFs had been overridden and radios distorted voices so no one could recognise anyone they'd worked with on their team before, to test how quickly squad cohesion could form, as well as to prevent anyone recognising someone on another team, in case friendship caused hesitation.

Charlie-Three was the team's specialist, she'd been given a special HOLOPAD loaded up with software programs designed to hack the simulated jiralhanae computers. She had the same basic BDU as Shepard and but only carried a MA-SSG and a MA-PDP. Guess she was planning to stealth as much as possible— That or she employed the age old tactic of using a dead alien's gun to kill his buddies and didn't want to be too weighed down.

Charlie-Four was the one that worried Shepard the most. Decked out in a CQB suit like Charlie-One the guy was moody, abrasive and slightly bloodthirsty. His choice in load out didn't inspire much confidence either; a PDP and ICW sure but in place of the standard issue SSG the crazy bastard had picked a MA-TS8g. Sure a shotgun was nice to have in a crowded corridor but they were meant to try and avoid detection as long as possible!

"Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name-" Shepard started muttering as their shuttle began its approach and Charlie-Three started transmitting the codes to get them aboard.

"Shut it Two!" Charlie-Four growled.

"Coming in on approachâ€¦ Looks like the battering the ship took from the sangheili took out their sensors." The pilot of their shuttle said over the radio, reading off some script that gave backstory to their 'mission'. "I'm gonna swing around, approach the airlock from the beneathâ€¦ ETA ninety seconds."

"Roger. Three, start-up that hacking program." Charlie-One ordered as he drew his SSG and ran a final systems check on his suit.

Finishing his prayer Shepard sent a withering glare at Charlie-Four before doing the same. As they neared the airlock the pilot sealed off the cockpit and opened the bay doors. As oxygen and pressure met void Charlie Team activated their magnetic boots to avoid being sucked out as the void attempted to be filled. Taking two or three deep breaths Shepard eyed the top of his suit's HUD, eyes fixed on the icons that confirmed enviro-seals were holding and his internal air supply was good.

"Fuck I hate EVA." Shepard muttered as the shuttle levelled off and the team disengaged the magnetic locks, kicking off and drifting towards the jiralhanae cruiser's airlock. Flipping himself as he closed in Shepard reactivated the locks and adhered himself to the cruiser's hull, the rest of Charlie Team doing the same.

"Running bypass." Charlie-Three said quietly as he HOLOPAD flared up. Triggering his own, currently in camo-mode, HOLOPAD Shepard ran a program to detect and copy the bypass. Sure it most likely wouldn't work on a real jiralhanae security system but it could serve as a starting point for such a program.

"C'mon, come on." Shepard hissed as Charlie-Three took far too much time for his liking. Sure the ship's sensors had been damaged but that didn't guarantee they couldn't detect something attaching itself to the hull. The longer they took out here the more likely they would be detected.

"Got it!" Charlie-Three hissed as the airlock slid open. Dropping into the opening first Charlie-Four wasn't quick enough to adjust himself before the ship's artificial gravity field exerted itself and pulled him to the floor.

Sharing a silent chuckle with Charlie-One Shepard and the missions CO stowed their SSGs, crouched to grip the edges of the airlock and swung themselves in. Twisting and landing perfectly. Charlie-Three simply pulled herself in, since she'd been positioned 'beneath' the airlock.

"Up you get." Shepard snickered, more to himself than to the team, as he reached down and pulled Charlie-Four up by his chest plate.

As Charlie-Four sealed the outer lock and pressurised the airlock Charlie-One, Charlie-four and Shepard readied their weapons and took up formation. Charlie-One was on point, following UNSC doctrine that

stated commanders led from the front, while Shepard and Charlie-Four took up positions on his left and right respectively so Charlie-Four was in the rear. Normally Charlie-Three would have taken the right with Charlie-Four in the rear but since she was the one with the codes she was the one who got the only slightly safer position.

Opening the door separating airlock from ship proper the squad was confronted with their first glimpse at the enemy AESIR. A little under Seven foot tall and designed to mimic the basic human shape the AESIR mech was an imposing sight. Polished off-white armour, onto which someone had stencilled the call sign for whatever alien race they would be mimicking, topped by a narrow 'head'. A thick vertical black visor ran the length of the head and made most people think the AESIR's sensors were contained thereâ€¦ Truth was the 'head' was just to make them look more human and less intimidating to regular people, all processing systems and sensory technology was stored beneath the chest plate's thick armour.

Charlie-Four raised his shotgun but thankfully Charlie-One and Shepard got their SSGs up faster, peppering the unaware hostiles with smg fire. After a quick burst each the mechs dropped their SIM-weapons, designed to mimic the shape and velocity of enemy weapons but without the lethality, and simply crouched down 'dead'. To compensate for the reduced power of the mech's weapons coding in their armour would register a kill if their shields dropped too low, somewhere around fifty to fifty five percent.

Pushing forward the team moved into the long corridor and scanned both directions, Charlie-One and Shepard checking to their left while Charlie-Four and Charlie-Three checked the right. When both sides confirmed it was clear Charlie-Three pulled up the Intel she had and plotted a course to their goal.

"Three decks up and towards the bow, access point for the ship's Nav-charts." Charlie-Three informed them as she transmitted schematics for this class of cruiser, a small marker tracing the most optimal route. "HIGH-COMM suspects the Brutes have shipyards hidden just outside one of their systems in dark-space. Wants access to the log so we can pinpoint the location."

"Couldn't just say 'here is the final test, be first to download the cookie recipe', could they?" Shepard mumbled as the team moved up the corridor, Shepard taking point along the left wall with Charlie-Three behind him. Charlie-One had Charlie-Four watching his back.

"What's the BS excuse to say why we have to fight the other teams anyway?" Charlie-Four asked casually.

"Each team is to consider itself the sole UNSC team running this mission." Charlie-One explained quietly. "Everyone else is to be treated as either an Insurrectionist or ONI."

"ONI?!" Charlie-Four snorted loudly, causing Shepard to pause mid-step to glare. "Don't tell me you believe that crap about a secret group of extremists running around sabotaging our attempts at peaceful, long-lasting coexistence with the aliens?"

"Yeah, that's just crap HIGH-COMM makes up to cover up Black-Ops against the Elites and the turians." Charlie-Three added, although

this time Shepard didn't acknowledge the loud chatter. He just silently fumed and swore that if any of them cost him top marks he'd frag them.

"Shut it!" Charlie-One snapped as the approached a pair of doors.

Shepard and Charlie-One took up position crouching against the door frame while Charlie-Three and Charlie-Four crossed the door to take up position on the far side. Charlie-One sent countdown across their networked VISRs. In perfect sync the doors were opened and the four candidates swept into their respective rooms, scanning for hostiles.

"Clear!" Charlie-Four's deep voice boomed.

"Clear!" Shepard sent through their radios, so as to try and avoid alerting the entire ship.

"**WARNING! WARNING! HOSTILES DETECTED ON DECK SEVEN!**"

The voice of what was meant to be a Jiralhanae Alpha, but due to the AESIR's limited vocal range sounded like a Texan in a trash compactor.

"You stupid son of a bitch." Shepard growled as he rounded on Charlie-Four.

"What'd you call me?!" Charlie-Four snarled back, adjusting his grip on the shotgun threateningly.

"That isn't about us." Charlie-Three cut in before things could escalate. "We're on deck thirteen."

"That means one of the other teams has been spotted." Charlie-One growled before switching to his ICW. "Hostiles will be converging on heightened alert and trying to converge on the guys up on Seven. We're moving quick, we're moving hard. Stealth takes a backseat to completing the mission."

"Great." Charlie-Four said with a bark of laughter, pointlessly cocking his shotgun as they moved out.

XX Wreck Of The Ruthless Domination, Deck Ten; Orbit Of Jupiter
Fifteen Minutes Later XX

Charlie Team and managed to make it about four minutes before Charlie-Four had spotted a AESIR, stencil reading 'Drone', and opened fire. That of course alerted every other hostile in the vicinity and got the 'Jiralhanae Alpha' to announce their location on deck thirteen. What followed was a large number of the mechs diverting towards them and a prolonged fire fight breaking out.

If Charlie-Three hadn't located those access tunnels, giving them a means to slip away and start ascending, then Shepard knew they'd have been registered dead and he'd have been penalised for the stupidity of Charlie-Four. As it was Shepard was mentally weighing the pros and cons of 'accidently' downing Charlie-Four. How bad could they penalise him for a friendly fire 'accident'?

"**Humans!**" The distorted metallic voice of an AESIR rang out, alerting Shepard and the team to a group of mechs moving up from behind. These ones carried SIM-Weapon versions of those jiralhanae shogun/pistol things and had the word 'Brute' across the chest plate.

"Dammit." Shepard hissed as he shoved Charlie-Four back into cover and then rushed to take shelter in a doorframe. Unclipping a grenade, actually a little ball that would beep a few times then send out a radio signal to let the mechs it 'exploded', Shepard armed and rolled the mock-explosive down towards the advancing mechs.

Three of the mechs dropped their guns and crouched, 'dead', while the others made exaggerated staggering motions. Charlie team opened fire, finishing them off. Moving forward the team reached their goal, the ship's AI core. As the doors slid open a bulky staff shot out and struck Charlie-Three, a distortion at the impact point knocking her off her feet. A single AESIR, the word Alpha across the chest and forearms, emerged carrying a 'boom-tube'.

The boom-tube had been an early experiment, to see if eezo based tech could be used to reproduce the signature jiralhanae gravity hammers. Unfortunately power requirements, and recoil strong enough to shake the muscle off the bone, meant it never went beyond early testing. At least until someone had the bright idea to use it in training as a sub for actual gravity hammers.

Charlie-Three was out, her suit would have definitely registered that as a fatal blow. That meant that Charlie Team was a member down, facing a stand-in for a powerful and experienced jiralhanae and had no hacking specialist to recover the data.

"Crap." Charlie-Four gulped, all his bluster and bravado gone. All three remaining members of Charlie Team opened fire; overheating their shotgun, ICW and SSG respectfully.

The AESIR crouched and Charlie-One moved to check on Charlie-Three. Charlie-Four moved into the core chamber and swept for other hostiles. Shepard stayed in position, glancing back and forth trying to cover both.

"Dammit, no chance to recover the data now." Charlie-One sighed. "Best we can do is use explosives, make sure the Insurrectionists can't get the data themselves."

"Got it." Charlie-Four yelled and readied a grenade.

"Delay that." Shepard barked as he moved to where Charlie-Three had decided to take a seat and relax. Firing up his HOLOPAD Shepard began to hack the encrypted codes and bypasses Charlie-Three had been given for the mission. "I can take the codes and get us the data, just cover me for a minute."

"That isn't your job, you're just a rifleman. How the hell do you know how to do that?" Charlie-One asked dumbfounded.

"Reds, Penal Squad, correspondent's courses." Shepard shrugged, listing all the areas he'd learned to commit cyber-crimes and how to override security protocols.

"Am I blowing it up or are we gonna wait on Two there to steal Three's diary?" Charlie-Four spat. He wanted to blow up the data, even had his grenade ready to render the console useless.

"If he can get us the data, we complete the mission proper." Charlie-One decided as Shepard finished retrieving the needed codes. "Sorry Three, want a 'viking funeral'?"

Charlie-Three just shrugged, stretched out her legs to get comfy and pulled an honest-to-goodness paperback novel from one of the compartments in her breastplate. Taking that to mean 'sure, why not' Charlie-One armed one of the grenades and retreated into the core before the fake bombs went off and radioed out the damage.

Advancing to the console from which he should be able to retrieve the data Shepard began running the bypass. About thirty seconds in a voice rang out from down the hallway they'd just come up from.

"Dead Brutes, unknowns ahead."

"Shit, one of the other teams." Charlie-One hissed as he dove for cover behind a terminal, Charlie-Four joining him and swapping out for his ICW. "Two, how's the download going?"

"Haven't even breeched the coding, hacking protocols we got suck." Shepard radioed back as he adjusted his position and used the console for cover.

"I say we set off some grenades to trash this stuff, take out the Innies while they're startled and make a break for it." Charlie-Four growled. "One, get on the horn and call in our evac."

"ETA for access about ninety seconds, complete download sixty." Shepard reported. "We can do what dumbass over there wants too, we can hold out for about two and a half minutes to get the data or I can stop the hack and just enter a virus to wipe everythingâ€¦ Stops the other teams and lets us keep our grenades."

"Keep hackingâ€¦ But have that virus ready." Charlie-One ordered as he readied a grenade. Tossing the grenade, to scatter the approaching team, Charlie-One and Charlie-Four leaned out of cover and began suppressing fire.

Shepard didn't bother opening fire, his location didn't give him a good angle to fire from and he needed to get the data. As he prepared his data wiping virus Shepard started up several other infiltration programs he had to target firewalls and encryptions he hadn't breeched with the codes Charlie-Three had, anything to speed up the process.

Shepard had to suppress a groan when he finally got through and found that all the data was written in whatever you called the old Covenant language. Firing up a translation program Shepard began searching for anything linked to NAV-data.

"C'mon, come onâ€¦ Got it!" Shepard laughed before quickly uploading the virus. Opening up the schematics Charlie-Three had given them earlier Shepard looked for a good escape route. "One, we got an airlock located on deck six. Sending you schematic location, arrange for evac there."

"Received and understood, got a route?" Charlie-One asked.

"Yeahâ€¦| back the way we came." Shepard admitted as he ghosted up to the door frame and prepped another grenade. "Fire in the hole!"

He deliberately said it loud, alerting the other team and sending them diving for cover. With the grenade bouncing down the hall Shepard, Charlie-One and Charlie-Four could pick line up their shots without risk of being hit. Once the grenade 'went off' and the other team, Golf Team according to IIFs, emerged from cover Charlie Team took them down.

"Right, calling evac." Charlie-One told them before running through whatever script he'd been given to use if the team made it this far. Once he had confirmation evac was on its way Charlie Team pushed forward, heading back towards those access tunnels.

Five close to ten minutes later Shepard was bypassing the airlock security protocols while Charlie-One and Charlie-Four provided covering fire. Enemy forces were approaching from both directions, AESIR on the left and another team on the right, and Shepard was having trouble getting the hacking programs to work properly. Finally getting the doors open Shepard yelled as his squadmates and stepped in.

"Switch to internal air, magnets onâ€¦| Opening external doors." Shepard ordered as he sealed the internal doors after Charlie-One and Charlie-Four entered.

Leaping out into the deep black void of space Shepard watched their escape shuttle open its bay doors and level off ahead of them. Once he was close enough the magnetic booths kicked in and dragged him down to the floor of the shuttle.

"Everybody in? Good, we are out of here!" The pilot called over the radio as the doors closed, the rear compartment re-pressurised and they sped off to report a completed final test.

****_XXXXX_****

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**_I'm dyslexic, so please point out any mistakes in spelling or grammar [I spell things the way they do in England and Ireland, so some things may look off to Americans]. Please leave your opinion via review or send them via PM, I'd like to know what you think.
_**

Well, I think that's everything I've gotta say so, hope you enjoyed the chapter.

This is Highvalour saying bye and thanks for reading.

7. Prologue Helljumper Training - Pt3

**Quick Glossary **

_**AESIR; Named for the Nordic gods of warfare and power these humanoid robotic drones serve as replacements to the dated and faulty LOKI mechs. Drawing on inspiration from the tales of the 'Morning War' and the victorious geth these drones are networked and each platoon is controlled remotely by specially designed AIs. These armoured golems are usually deployed on planets where long term organic troop deployment would prove too difficult logistically. Many are also used in Special Forces Training as their size, durability and physical capabilities allow them to serve as effective stand-ins for powerful Xeno species such as jiralhanae or krogan.
**_

_**VANIR; Named for the Nordic gods of wisdom and agriculture the civilian version of the AESIR function as land workers and maintenance personal within hazardous locations. While primarily utilised by UNSC/UEG overseen farms or facilities some affluent citizens have begun to use them, finding the increased efficiency and output well worth the price of purchasing the advanced mechs.
**_

**LOKI; Outdated and poorly coded mechs developed by humanity in the early 2500s. Their name, an acronym created from the names of the four man team who designed the LOKI, proved prophetic as the mechs poor coding [even when compared to the work of the less AI savvy Relay Races]often caused the machines to malfunction and turn on any around them. Now only seen on Independent Colonies or in the backrooms of Terminus System bazaars these cheap and expendable mechs are viewed by those who face them the same way krogan view vorchas in the Blood Pack. **

**Another chapter, another attempt to entertain you all. I honestly do not have anything else to add, so on with the show! **

**Halo belongs to Microsoft Studios**

**Mass Effect belongs to belongs to Bioware**

**XXXXXX**

XX Wreck Of The Ruthless Domination; Orbit Of Jupiter -2575 XX

The Ruthless Domination, an old scuttled jiralhanae vessel whose design dated back to the Human-Covenant War, had been recovered by

the UNSC in 2743 following the brutal battle above the sangheili controlled Prospero. While the ship provided very little in the way of new data, or the slow evolution of jiralhanae technology following the Covenant collapse, it did provide a useful venue for training UNSC forces for operations inside jiralhanae vessels... Training that could also prove useful should certain sangheili factions ever grow too powerful.

It was aboard the Ruthless Domination that the last series of tests would be carried out to determine the future for each of the ODST trainees. While it was or less a given that anyone still in the program was guaranteed to be made a Helljumper which battalion of the 105th Marine Expeditionary Unit they'd be assigned to. Only the very top of the graduates would even be considered for the 7th Shock Troops Battalion, traditionally the best of the best of the best. That was why every suit was wired with state of the art sensors to monitor the wearer's performance. Why the entire ship was rigged with hundreds upon hundreds of cameras streaming footage from a multitude of angles to the top strategists, data analysts and military veterans the UNSC had.

Eight teams, each consisting of four trainees, would be sent to board at different breach points. Each team had to successfully falsify access codes, move through the ship facing against AI controlled AESIR mechs and compete against each other to capture either a HVP or crucial data from the ship's bridge. The AESIR carried training weapons modelled after standard Jiralhanae Empire equipment, although with the lethality toned down, and were under the control of highly effective AIs whose sole purpose was to perfectly mimic the tactics jiralhanae security would employ to stop boarding parties.

Shepard's assault team was to gain access via one of the docking bays. While it meant they had the easiest access point they were also looking at some of the heaviest resistance once detected inside the ship. Fire team Charlie, team names having been plucked from the phonetic alphabet, was comprised of Shepard himself and three others.

Charlie-One, big guy who'd been assigned the CQB armour variant. Guy was designated leader for this mission. Shepard didn't know him, didn't know any of them actually. Everyone's IFFs had been overridden and radios distorted voices so no one could recognise anyone they'd worked with on their team before, to test how quickly squad cohesion could form, as well as to prevent anyone recognising someone on another team, in case friendship caused hesitation.

Charlie-Three was the team's specialist, she'd been given a special HOLOPAD loaded up with software programs designed to hack the simulated jiralhanae computers. She had the same basic BDU as Shepard and but only carried a MA-SSG and a MA-PDP. Guess she was planning to stealth as much as possible. That or she employed the age old tactic of using a dead alien's gun to kill his buddies and didn't want to be too weighed down.

Charlie-Four was the one that worried Shepard the most. Decked out in a CQB suit like Charlie-One the guy was moody, abrasive and slightly bloodthirsty. His choice in load out didn't inspire much confidence either; a PDP and ICW sure but in place of the standard issue SSG the crazy bastard had picked a MA-TS8g. Sure a shotgun was nice to have in a crowded corridor but they were meant to try and avoid detection

as long as possible!

"Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name-" Shepard started muttering as their shuttle began its approach and Charlie-Three started transmitting the codes to get them aboard.

"Shut it Two!" Charlie-Four growled.

"Coming in on approachâ€¦ Looks like the battering the ship took from the sangheili took out their sensors." The pilot of their shuttle said over the radio, reading off some script that gave backstory to their 'mission'. "I'm gonna swing around, approach the airlock from the beneathâ€¦ ETA ninety seconds."

"Roger. Three, start-up that hacking program." Charlie-One ordered as he drew his SSG and ran a final systems check on his suit.

Finishing his prayer Shepard sent a withering glare at Charlie-Four before doing the same. As they neared the airlock the pilot sealed off the cockpit and opened the bay doors. As oxygen and pressure met void Charlie Team activated their magnetic boots to avoid being sucked out as the void attempted to be filled. Taking two or three deep breaths Shepard eyed the top of his suit's HUD, eyes fixed on the icons that confirmed enviro-seals were holding and his internal air supply was good.

"Fuck I hate EVA." Shepard muttered as the shuttle levelled off and the team disengaged the magnetic locks, kicking off and drifting towards the jiralhanae cruiser's airlock. Flipping himself as he closed in Shepard reactivated the locks and adhered himself to the cruiser's hull, the rest of Charlie Team doing the same.

"Running bypass." Charlie-Three said quietly as he HOLOPAD flared up. Triggering his own, currently in camo-mode, HOLOPAD Shepard ran a program to detect and copy the bypass. Sure it most likely wouldn't work on a real jiralhanae security system but it could serve as a starting point for such a program.

"C'mon, come on." Shepard hissed as Charlie-Three took far too much time for his liking. Sure the ship's sensors had been damaged but that didn't guarantee they couldn't detect something attaching itself to the hull. The longer they took out here the more likely they would be detected.

"Got it!" Charlie-Three hissed as the airlock slid open. Dropping into the opening first Charlie-Four wasn't quick enough to adjust himself before the ship's artificial gravity field exerted itself and pulled him to the floor.

Sharing a silent chuckle with Charlie-One Shepard and the missions CO stowed their SSGs, crouched to grip the edges of the airlock and swung themselves in. Twisting and landing perfectly. Charlie-Three simply pulled herself in, since she'd been positioned 'beneath' the airlock.

"Up you get." Shepard snickered, more to himself than to the team, as he reached down and pulled Charlie-Four up by his chest plate.

As Charlie-Four sealed the outer lock and pressurised the airlock

Charlie-One, Charlie-four and Shepard readied their weapons and took up formation. Charlie-One was on point, following UNSC doctrine that stated commanders led from the front, while Shepard and Charlie-Four took up positions on his left and right respectively so Charlie-Four was in the rear. Normally Charlie-Three would have taken the right with Charlie-Four in the rear but since she was the one with the codes she was the one who got the only slightly safer position.

Opening the door separating airlock from ship proper the squad was confronted with their first glimpse at the enemy AESIR. A little under Seven foot tall and designed to mimic the basic human shape the AESIR mech was an imposing sight. Polished off-white armour, onto which someone had stencilled the call sign for whatever alien race they would be mimicking, topped by a narrow 'head'. A thick vertical black visor ran the length of the head and made most people think the AESIR's sensors were contained thereâ€¦ Truth was the 'head' was just to make them look more human and less intimidating to regular people, all processing systems and sensory technology was stored beneath the chest plate's thick armour.

Charlie-Four raised his shotgun but thankfully Charlie-One and Shepard got their SSGs up faster, peppering the unaware hostiles with smg fire. After a quick burst each the mechs dropped their SIM-weapons, designed to mimic the shape and velocity of enemy weapons but without the lethality, and simply crouched down 'dead'. To compensate for the reduced power of the mech's weapons coding in their armour would register a kill if their shields dropped too low, somewhere around fifty to fifty five percent.

Pushing forward the team moved into the long corridor and scanned both directions, Charlie-One and Shepard checking to their left while Charlie-Four and Charlie-Three checked the right. When both sides confirmed it was clear Charlie-Three pulled up the Intel she had and plotted a course to their goal.

"Three decks up and towards the bow, access point for the ship's Nav-charts." Charlie-Three informed them as she transmitted schematics for this class of cruiser, a small marker tracing the most optimal route. "HIGH-COMM suspects the Brutes have shipyards hidden just outside one of their systems in dark-space. Wants access to the log so we can pinpoint the location."

"Couldn't just say 'here is the final test, be first to download the cookie recipe', could they?" Shepard mumbled as the team moved up the corridor, Shepard taking point along the left wall with Charlie-Three behind him. Charlie-One had Charlie-Four watching his back.

"What's the BS excuse to say why we have to fight the other teams anyway?" Charlie-Four asked casually.

"Each team is to consider itself the sole UNSC team running this mission." Charlie-One explained quietly. "Everyone else is to be treated as either an Insurrectionist or ONI."

"ONI?!" Charlie-Four snorted loudly, causing Shepard to pause mid-step to glare. "Don't tell me you believe that crap about a secret group of extremists running around sabotaging our attempts at peaceful, long-lasting coexistence with the aliens?"

"Yeah, that's just crap HIGH-COMM makes up to cover up Black-Ops against the Elites and the turians." Charlie-Three added, although this time Shepard didn't acknowledge the loud chatter. He just silently fumed and swore that if any of them cost him top marks he'd frag them.

"Shut it!" Charlie-One snapped as the approached a pair of doors.

Shepard and Charlie-One took up position crouching against the door frame while Charlie-Three and Charlie-Four crossed the door to take up position on the far side. Charlie-One sent countdown across their networked VISRs. In perfect sync the doors were opened and the four candidates swept into their respective rooms, scanning for hostiles.

"Clear!" Charlie-Four's deep voice boomed.

"Clear!" Shepard sent through their radios, so as to try and avoid alerting the entire ship.

"**WARNING! WARNING! HOSTILES DETECTED ON DECK SEVEN!**"

The voice of what was meant to be a jiralhanae Alpha, but due to the AESIR's limited vocal rang sounded like a Texan in a trash compactor.

"You stupid son of a bitch." Shepard growled as he rounded on Charlie-Four.

"What'd you call me?!" Charlie-Four snarled back, adjusting his grip on the shotgun threateningly.

"That isn't about us." Charlie-Three cut in before things could escalate. "We're on deck thirteen."

"That means one of the other teams has been spotted." Charlie-One growled before switching to his ICW. "Hostiles will be converging on heightened alert and trying to converge on the guys up on Sevenâ€| We're moving quick, we're moving hard. Stealth takes a backseat to completing the mission."

"Great." Charlie-Four said with a bark of laughter, pointlessly cocking his shotgun as they moved out.

XX Wreck Of The Ruthless Domination, Deck Ten; Orbit Of Jupiter â€
Fifteen Minutes Later XX

Charlie Team and managed to make it about four minutes before Charlie-Four had spotted a AESIR, stencil reading 'Drone', and opened fire. That of course alerted every other hostile in the vicinity and got the 'Jiralhanae Alpha' to announce their location on deck thirteen. What followed was a large number of the mechs diverting towards them and a prolonged fire fight breaking out.

If Charlie-Three hadn't located those access tunnels, giving them a means to slip away and start ascending, then Shepard knew they'd have been registered dead and he'd have been penalised for the stupidity of Charlie-Four. As it was Shepard was mentally weighing the pros and cons of 'accidently' downing Charlie-Four. How bad could they

penalise him for a friendly fire 'accident'?

"**Humans!**" The distorted metallic voice of an AESIR rang out, alerting Shepard and the team to a group of mechs moving up from behind. These ones carried SIM-Weapon versions of those jiralhanae shogun/pistol things and had the word 'Brute' across the chest plate.

"Dammit." Shepard hissed as he shoved Charlie-Four back into cover and then rushed to take shelter in a doorframe. Unclipping a grenade, actually a little ball that would beep a few times then send out a radio signal to let the mechs it 'exploded', Shepard armed and rolled the mock-explosive down towards the advancing mechs.

Three of the mechs dropped their guns and crouched, 'dead', while the others made exaggerated staggering motions. Charlie team opened fire, finishing them off. Moving forward the team reached their goal, the ship's AI core. As the doors slid open a bulky staff shot out and struck Charlie-Three, a distortion at the impact point knocking her off her feet. A single AESIR, the word Alpha across the chest and forearms, emerged carrying a 'boom-tube'.

The boom-tube had been an early experiment, to see if eezo based tech could be used to reproduce the signature jiralhanae gravity hammers. Unfortunately power requirements, and recoil strong enough to shake the muscle off the bone, meant it never went beyond early testing. At least until someone had the bright idea to use it in training as a sub for actual gravity hammers.

Charlie-Three was out, her suit would have definitely registered that as a fatal blow. That meant that Charlie Team was a member down, facing a stand-in for a powerful and experienced jiralhanae and had no hacking specialist to recover the data.

"Crap." Charlie-Four gulped, all his bluster and bravado gone. All three remaining members of Charlie Team opened fire; overheating their shotgun, ICW and SSG respectfully.

The AESIR crouched and Charlie-One moved to check on Charlie-Three. Charlie-Four moved into the core chamber and swept for other hostiles. Shepard stayed in position, glancing back and forth trying to cover both.

"Dammit, no chance to recover the data now." Charlie-One sighed. "Best we can do is use explosives, make sure the Insurrectionists can't get the data themselves."

"Got it." Charlie-Four yelled and readied a grenade.

"Delay that." Shepard barked as he moved to where Charlie-Three had decided to take a seat and relax. Firing up his HOLOPAD Shepard began to hack the encrypted codes and bypasses Charlie-Three had been given for the mission. "I can take the codes and get us the data, just cover me for a minute."

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8. Prologue Black-Ops

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XXXXX

XX Omega Space Station, Omega Nebula " 2775 XX

Seven point eight million sentient beings called this station home;
slavers, smugglers, pirates, mercenaries. It was often said that
firing a gun into a crowd had a ninety-nine point nine nine nine
percent chance of the rounding a criminal and a zero percent chance
of hurting an innocent soul. The station ran on power and the will to
use it. Which explains why the human/batarian coalition that was
the Blue Suns could work so well there. The private security
organization, which operates throughout both the Skyllian Verge and
along the Terminus/UEG Border systems, made its fortune offering to
protect Independent Human Colonies from pirates and slaver attacks
without the colonists being forced to accept UEG/UNSC subjugation.
The fact that many of these pirates and slavers learned about the
colonies from the Blue Suns in the first place was a closely guarded
secret.

So, as one would expect, the idea of UNSC personnel waiting on Omega
to do a deal with the mercs should have been simply ridiculous. Which
was why it was actually very common for Department of Research and
Development officials to go undercover as Insurrectionists looking to
use the Blue Suns to purchase stolen Relay Race weaponry. ODSTS,
primarily those who come from criminal or Innies backgrounds
themselves, would be assigned to act as fellow Insurrectionists and
provide cover.

That was how First Lieutenant John Shepard found himself sitting in a
dang alleyway, in civilian clothing and a cheap shield harness,
waiting with his squad and their VIP. The squad was led by Captain
James Rodgers, who thankfully did not hold a grudge against Shepard
for breaking his nose following the revelation that he'd been
deliberately trying to cause trouble aboard The Ruthless Domination.
Rodger's second-in-command was a Corporal named Brady, who served as
the squad's medic in normal operations while Private Collins made up

the fourth member.

Normal callsigns for the squad were Cap, Patch and Boomer. Shepard, as the new guy to the squad and having only just qualified as a Helljumper, would be Rookie until he earned a better nameâ€¦ Or someone else joined the squad which would make them the new Rookie by default.

The team's VIP, a DRD scientist named West, was a condescending bitch who felt that since she had about six letters after her name and should be referred to as Doctor it meant she was better than the rest of them. That arrogance was gonna cause problems, Shepard felt it, but the fact that he had gang tattoos and had served in a Penal Squad meant West felt perfectly okay with ignoring every word that left his mouth. Rodgers agreed with Shepard but had his hands tied since their orders were to follow West's instructions.

The backstory for their little motley crew was that West was a representative of an Insurrectionist group planning to stage an armed uprising. Rodgers and Collins being fellow Innies assigned to protect her. Brady and Shepard would claim to be members of criminal and terrorist organisations willing to offer bodies and advise in exchange for moneyâ€¦ Fact that Shepard was the 'terrorist' just made the ODSs groan.

"Now remember, the Blue Suns are selling us weapons manufactured by Batarian State Arms. These things are normally impossible to acquire outside of the Batarian Military." West droned on. "We've seen weapons damage from slaver and pirate attacks that we suspect are from these kinds of weapons but so far have had no real chance to study them. This deal will therefore not only give the DRD more alien weapon systems to study for ways to improve our but it will also allow us a chance to investigate if it was batarian weapons that were used in the attack."

"We do we care what gun was used? All that should matter is finding who pulled the trigger." Collins grumbled as he checked over the small, and mostly crap, shield harness the team had on for protection.

Sure they had lightweight, 'so small an asari could almost wear it', hardsuits on under their civvies but they'd been ordered to leave them powered down so as to not alert the Blue Suns via energy signals.

"If BSA built the guns, then the Batarian Hegemony most likely supplied them to the raiders involved." Rodgers explained as he inspected the M-3 Predator he carried, trying to familiarise himself with it before the Blue Suns arrived.

"Which would mean that the Hegemony most likely directed those raiders against UEG and Independent Human colonies." Shepard added in as he played with his M-6 Carnifex, it being a similar size and design to the old hand cannons he'd used with the Reds. "That's something the spin-doctors can use to convince the Independents to just shut up and fall in line easier."

"But we're here to buy BSR weapons illegallyâ€¦ So how will the pirates having used them prove the Hegemony supplied them?" Brady asked as he familiarised himself with his own Carnifex.

"Because multiple attacks, across such a wide area, could not be all from the same raider party." West replied. "And considering all the trouble we're going through just to get our hands on a few rifles it is highly unlikely some simple slavers could get their hands on them. Ergo, the weapons must have come from the Batarians themselves."

"Anything on sensors?" Rodgers asked.

"Nothing out of the norm yet, Blue Suns not expected for another five minutes." Shepard replied after glancing at a tablet beside him that provided data from the numerous motion sensors he'd set up. It was impossible to not have a motion sensor triggered on Omega, the sheer number of people meant the very walls shuck, but by getting a baseline reading ahead of time Shepard was able to tell normal travel apart from any approaching individuals.

"I don't like this, we're too exposed hereâ€¦ Too under armed and seriously under-armoured." Collins muttered as he leaned over to double-check the Lancer, a civilian grade version of the Misriah Armory ICW, he had hidden behind one of the dumpsters lining the alleyway.

"Contact." Shepard announced as his HOLOPAD flared and the firing mechanism in the Carnifex reactivated, gun safety was literally beaten into you in the Penal Squads. A minute later a large, nondescript truck pulled into the alley and a pair of Blue Sun mercenaries got out.

"Which of you is Tarak?" West called out as the pair of mercs made their way towards them, scanning the area constantly for any signs of a double-cross. When neither would reply she called out again.

"Shut it human." One growled before looking to the other. A brief silent communication later the speaker was turning and signalling to the truck.

Three more Blue Sun mercs emerged from the truck, two unidentifiable due to their armour and one batarian without a helmet. The batarian marched up to their group, looked them up and down and then simply snorted.

"Come on, I don't have all day." He growled before turning and walking back to the truck. Walking to the side the batarian opened it up to reveal shelves upon shelves of weapons.

"_Tarak's bazaar!_" The batarian grunted, speaking in English as opposed to his own native Khar'shal dialect. "Prices are in 'Eezo' and iridium units. They are non-negotiable.

"Nice!" Brady whistled as he climbed in the back of the truck and began looking about.

"This looks interesting." Shepard muttered as he picked a large, bulky rifle from its display.

"That's a Kishock Harpoon Gun, a batarian rifle." One of the Blue Sun guards supplied, outing himself as human. "We've got footage to show its effectiveness if you're interested."

With a nod Shepard tapped at a small panel beside where he'd taken the Kishock from and began to skim through about a dozen vids of the weapon in action "against everything from varren and vorchas through to humans and batarians who'd made the mistake of angering the Blue Suns. After rewatching the human and batarian vids a few more times Shepard nodded to himself and made his way over to West and Rodgers, both of whom were busy talking with Tarak about payment and delivery of their orders.

"This rifles, get them." Shepard grunted, shoving the Krishock into West's hands.

"Wha-hey!" West snapped indignity as the weight of the rifle nearly caused her to fall over.

"How many of these things you got?" Shepard asked Tarak, completely ignoring West. He was a 'terrorist-for-hire', not some idiotic idealist who wanted liberty from the 'fascist authoritarian system' of the UEG. He was being paid to assist in planning a rebellion, not be nice.

"Including the display, five. We salvaged them from a BSA transport that had engine trouble." Tarak explained, his voice dripping with mock sadness. "By the time our ships arrived, the entire crew was dead. Such a senseless waste of life."

"yeah, a real shame." Rodgers snorted as he took the rifle from the struggling West and made a point of looking it over. Rodgers wasn't much for sniper rifles, being more of an assault rifle kinda guy, so it was more for show before he agreed to get them some batarian tech to study.

"Everything else was already sold, these rifles are all we've got left." Tarak went on. "Don't know why they didn't sell already, damn good rifle and deadly against everything I've ever seen them shot at."

"We'll take them, add them to the order." West cut in, clearly annoyed at Shepard's actions and wanting to re-establish that she was in charge. "We'll also take two dozen of those turian assault rifles, forty of the sub-machine guns and a hundred handguns."

"That's a pretty big order." Tarak chuckled, clearly looking forward to taking in so much for the Blue Suns in one sale.

As the two continued to discuss the order Shepard took a moment to step to the side and check the tablet linked to his sensors, paranoia was always good on missions like this. Flicking back through the data Shepard noted that nothing had tripped them for the last few minutes. That wasn't right.

Glancing up Shepard spotted the dark yellow armour just as a barrage of gunfire tore through the shields, then the armour and flesh, of a Blue Suns guard.

"Contact! Eclipse!" Shepard roared, Carnifex seeming to appear in hand as he took cover and began firing on the advancing attackers.

The Blue Suns rushed for cover before returning fire, hoping a wall of bullets would halt the enemy advance.

"A double cross!?" Tarak snarled, rounding on West with his own weapon drawn.

"Shit, how'd they sneak up on us?" Collins yelled as he and Brady moved to assist against the Eclipse.

"We got distracted looking at all the pretty guns, that's how!" Rodgers snapped as he pushed West back further into the safety of the truck. "hey Tarak, these guns good for a test run?"

"They're loaded but I had the firing mechanisms deactivated." Tarak growled, angry that such an important safety feature during blackmarket weapons deals was actually working against him. "And I don't have the reactivation codes on hand."

"Shit! Alright, Rookie get back in here and get to work!" Rodgers ordered as he and the others provided covering fire for Shepard to fall back.

"Dammit, dammit, dammit." Shepard muttered over and over as he tried to hack the systems of the displayed weapons so he and the other Helljumpers could use them to survive.

"Another Blue Sun down." Brady reported before a lucky Eclipse shot took out half his face.

"Fuck!" Shepard hissed before he managed to reactivate the rifle. Tossing that one to Rodgers Shepard set about working on another for Collins.

"Damned Eclipse bastards!" Tarak snarled as holographic markers, the kind Relay Races overlaid atop their HOLOPAD created force fields, formed around him. Stepping out and unleashing a barrage of weapons fire Tarak snarled as the last of his Blue Suns lackeys was dropped.

"Oh crap." Tarak gulped as he spotted an Eclipse Heavy, a rocket launcher carrying asari, came into view.

"Focus Fire!" Rodgers roared as he, Tarak and Collins all opened fire on the Heavy.

While they held off the attackers Shepard made a judgement call; instead of hacking an assault rifle for himself he set about trying to reactivate the Kishock, for two reasons. Reason one being that long range precision weapons was where his expertise lay and reason two being it gave him a chance to scan and retrieve as much information on the rifle as he could in case they had to ditch the weapons and retreat.

"We need to get out of here." Shepard offered as he took up position and began scanning for an important looking target, batarian programming left a lot to be desired.

"Great idea Rookie, any idea how?" Rodgers snapped.

"The truck is good to go, just needs someone to drive it." Tarak

pointed out. "One of you run up front and get it, the rest can provide covering fire."

"I've got an idea, someone get ready to run." Shepard grunted as he spotted, what had to be, the most confidentially placed fuel tanker in the history of time and space. Ducking back into cover to let the rifle completely vent its heat buildup Shepard glanced at Collins, who nodded. Counting to three in his head Shepard popped up and fired off two shots, overheating the rifle, and detonating the tanker.

The resulting flaming explosion sent the Eclipse diving for cover and gave Collins an opening to rush forward and get into the truck's cab. As the truck started up and was thrown into reverse Shepard caught a grip of Brady's body and hauled it away from the still open doors.

"Soâ€|" Tarak panted as they escaped the Eclipse. "â€| I trust you're satisfied with the quality of the weapons I'm offering?"

**XXXXX**

**Okay, one more chapter [showing the events on Tyran in full] and then I'll be getting to the events of Mass Effect 1.**

**Sorry for the delay, don't know how long the gap before the next one will be as I'm gonna work on Thunderstruck and Team Nightmare next.**

**I'm dyslexic, so please point out any mistakes in spelling or grammar [I spell things the way they do in England and Ireland, so some things may look off to Americans]. Please leave your opinion via review or send them via PM, I'd like to know what you think. Well, I think that's everything I've gotta say so, hope you enjoyed the chapter.**

**This is Highvalour saying bye and thanks for reading**

9. Prologue The Tyran Strain

**So just under a year since I updated this story. Nearly caught up with the scene shown at the beginning of Chapter 4 and onto the last little Prologue section before Shepard is actually picked for the mission that changes the course of his life.**

**note: I edited a little bit of the info over in the CODEX relating to part of the timeline... Added stuff that alludes to things which will come into play at some point.**

_Halo belongs to Microsoft Studios

_Mass Effect belongs to belongs to Bioware

_XXXXX

XX UNMC Shanghai; Orbit Over Tyran - 2776 CE XX

All muttering and joking died down when Captain Rodgers Stood up and addressed the two ODSF squads.

The first squad was his own and included Corporal Collins -call sign Boomer-, Corporal Wilkins â€" call sign Nova â€" and Private First Class Jones â€" Shepard's replacement and the 'greenhorn'.

Second Lieutenant Shepard was in charge of the second squad; which included his old 'War Games' buddie Sergeant Matsaki â€" Sweeps-, Lance Corporal Agu â€" the medic oh so poetically nicknamed 'Patches'- and Private Smith AKA the Rookieâ€| Shepard and Rodgers had faced a bit of a dilemma when they'd realised both teams had a newbie, you couldn't have two troopers called 'Rookie'. Shepard had won the game of Rock, Paper, Scissors so poor old Jones got stuck with Greenhorn.

"Our target is this man." Rodgers announced as a hologram of uncaring man in an expensive grey suit appeared. "His name is Donovan Hock, he's an industrialist whose company specialises in Aircar components. A little over two years ago Hock's company bought up an old Misriah Armory production facilityâ€| Got it real cheap by offering to pick up the bill for removing Misriah's old equipment and covering their disposal."

"Who signed off on that?" Collins asked, Misriah designs and production moulds being heavily guarded due to their use supplying the UNMC with weapons.

"Bunch of 'well paid' individuals, all of whom are currently being 'interviewed' by HIGHCOMM." Rodgers replied before Hock's image was replaced by a hologram of some kind of rifle. "Just under eighteen months ago these assault rifles, which the turians have taken to designating the 'Vindicator' â€" origin of the name is unknown â€" started showing up in the hands of both the Blue Suns and raider groups suspected of links to the Blue Suns. Mostly focused along the '314 Corridor'."

"That's not good."

"Damn right its not, turians think we're supplying these things to the Terminus raiders like the batarians are in the Verge." Rodgers sighed. "As it stands major talks are beginning next week about improving relations between the UEG and Hierarchy. If we don't have Hock in custody to show the UNMC is innocent, it'll be bad."

"Hold on Sir, are we sure this Hock guy is responsible?" Jones asked.

"Those people I mentioned, the ones being 'interviewed', they confirmed that Hock shipped slag to the disposal site and then less than a week later shipped a massive order of custom fuel-injection exhausts to a specialist client out in the Terminus Systems." Rodgers went on. "Now, I don't know about the rest of you but I've never heard of a 'fuel-injection exhaust' â€" nor is there any such thing listed in Hock's catalogues â€" so it's a safe bet that the Misriah equipment was in that shipment."

"We sure he's still involved?" Shepard yawned. "maybe it was a one off case of treason?"

"We're sure, Navy picked up nearly two hundred of these on-board a transport ship licenced by Hock last week." Rodgers clarified as the

hologram shifted to display an after-action report. "Raiders hit the transport close enough to a patrol that the Navy was able to show up in time and drive them off. Patrol got suspicious when the transport declined offers for further assistance and tried to leave despite the damages they'd taken."

"So Hock knows we know about the guns, why is he about?" Masaki snorted.

"He doesn't." Shepard noted as he moved forward to better read the report. "Says here the transport's comms systems were damaged, they never got off a message about the patrolâ€¦ Seems the patrol took the crew into custody, confiscated the guns then detonated the ship. Reporting in its wreckage several hours later."

"That's right, as far as Hock or his associates knew the shipment was lost to thieves." Rodgers said before changing the hologram again, this time displaying a rather fancy looking penthouse suite. "Hock is hosting a gala at his mansion, located in Skitarii â€" Tryan's second largest city. Reason we can't just have the local cops pick him up is the Chief of Skitarii's police, the city's mayor AND the provincial governor are all on the guest listâ€¦ We so much as fart in his direction and he'll know, might even run."

"So what, we gate crashing this gala of his, black-bagging him and handing him over to scary men with no names?" Agu laughed. "Aren't there civil rights or some crap like that people are gonna complain about?"

"Normally but when you sell technology and/or state secrets you kinda forfeit those civil liberties. Now, since we're running two squads as a single unit I'm wanna double check does everyone know each other's call-signs?" When Smith gave sounded uncertain Rodgers just sighed. "right Rookie listen up; You are the resident Rookie â€" Lieutenant over there won the naming rights-. Jones on my squad is the 'Greenhorn' since she's fresh just like you. Collins is 'Boomer' since he's my explosives expert and Wilkins is 'Nova' because he isn't too bright."

This got a series of snorts and chuckles out of Collins and Shepard while Wilkins gave the Captain a distinctly non-regulation salute.

"On the other side of the room you have Sergeant Matsaki, aka 'Sweeps', and the charming Corporal Agu otherwise known as 'Patches'." Rodgers continued, ignoring the laughter.

"And I'm your local Chaplain." Shepard managed between chuckles. "Here to administer spiritual advise, and headshots, as needed."

"Are you actually a priest?" Smith asked, causing Shepard and Collins to absolutely lose it.

"You know Nova, I think he's about as bright as we joke about you being." Rodgers noted with a shake of his head. Wilkins, who had two degrees and a doctorate, decided not to dignify the comment with a reply.

"Chaplain, your team is to secure the lobby and parking lot." Rodgers

told them. "My squad will be dropping onto the roof and moving down to secure the target."

"You just want me to hack the building's security and lock everything down, that's why my squad is here right?" Shepard sighed.

"yep."

XX Skitarii; Tyran XX

Skitarii was generally regarded as being Tyran's second city not because of its political or strategic importance but because of the sheer amount of money present. Built on a large, naturally occurring island located just off the mainland the city was a mass of high end hotels, stores, theatres, casinos and brothels Skitarii existed to provide distractions and delights to the right and degenerate. An asari, Slipspaced out by Hahne-Kedar to be wine and dine before licencing talks, favourably compared the city to those on Illium "the asari's more grounded bodyguards called it 'Omega with a coat of paint'."

Shepard was reminded of New Vegas, back on Earth, in that the whole damn city was foul with corruption, cash and neon lights.

"Isn't that gonna be a bit, I dunno, unwieldy in the party Sir?" Smith asked as Shepard finished triple checking his DMR.

"It's bigger and meaner looking than the SSG, I rock up packing this and any rent-a-cop Hock has on his payroll might think twice about causing trouble." Shepard explained as he made sure the safety was on before reactivating the firing mechanism. "Same reason Sweeps has her shoty."

"Well, that and she's a Cadian." Agu joked.

"So should I be carrying my ICW when we arrive?" Smith asked.

"That'd be a good call." Agu yawned as he finished double-checking his own ICW.

"Right Chaplain, show time." Rodgers announced over comms.

"Okay Rookie, let's hope you didn't screw up integrating your jumpack with your armour." Shepard chuckled as he opened the side door on the D132H-TC and leaned out. "Patches with me, we're gonna secure the lobby and lock the building down. Sweeps, you take the Rookie and make sure the underground lot is secure. Wouldn't surprise me if these fat-cats had overrides on the elevators letting them run for their cars."

"Alpha Squad, we are being dropped on the roof and will await Beta Squad's securing of security before entering." Rodgers ordered. "I want this done quick, clean and with as little fuss as possible."

"Sir, yes Sir!"

"...hmm... Our Father, who art in heaven..." Shepard began before stepping forward, plummeting from their transport towards the ground

over three hundred floors below.

"Helljumper, helljumper where have you been?" Agu and Matsaki quoted, with much less spiritual meaning but equal reverence, before following Shepard out.

"â€| Feet first to hell and back again!" Smith finished as he took a deep breath and followed his squad, not knowing just how prophetic those words would be!

Shepard, being backed up by an ICW packing Agu, was already forcing his way past the doorman by the time Smith touched down. Detaching his ICW Smith rushed to catch up with Matsaki who was heading towards the underground parking lot.

As the pair of heavily armoured and armed ODSs barged into the front lobby of one of the most expensive hotels in all of Tyran reactions varied. The doorman, who Shepard had seemingly effortlessly caught a grip of and dragged into the lobby as he'd passed gave a strangled cry when he was tossed to the ground, several guests huddled behind spouses or furniture. A trio of security officers made moves to draw their guns but froze when Agu shouldered his ICW and made a disapproving 'tut'.

One older gentleman decked out in a fancy navy suit covered in medals, facial recognition ID'd him as the Skitariian Chief of Police, tried to demand to know what was happening but learned why trying to shop a motivated space marine â€" who was wearing more than a hundred pounds of armour and had undergone several combat tailored gene therapy sessions â€" was a stupid thing to do at his age and was knocked flying by a simple shoulder nudge.

One of the receptionists, who looked young enough to still be in school, tried to drop the security barriers around the receptionists' desk. Shepard simply increased his pace, holstered his DMR and caught the shutters before they touched down. Straining against the shutter's motors Shepard kicked at the small hinged section of the desk â€" taking the damned thing off its hinges â€" and ducked under the shutters.

"Let's keep calm and back away from the desk." Shepard growled, his helmet slightly distorting his voice, as he rose and drew his SDP and levelled it at the receptionists. When the two women and one man behind the counter backed away, Shepard nodded in approval and approached one of the consoles. "Martial Law override; Access code 1-Delta-Lima-4-Tango-0-5-7-3-8-Uniform-Sierra-1-1-7!"

"Code accepted. Security control granted!"

"Lockdown elevators â€" ignore all emergency release protocols â€" and initiate stairwell and exit mag-locks!" Shepard ordered before switching over to his comms. "Shield, stairs and elevators are under control. Opening route to target. Over!"

"Understood! On route. Out!"

"Sweeps, report. Over!" Shepard ordered, switching to his own squad.

"Underground secure, valet argued for a bit but things are under

control now. Over!"

"Rodger, accessing security feed. Let's evaluate your work. Over!" Shepard laughed as he raised the shutters around the receptionists' desk.

"Chaplain, little help here." Agu called out.

Glancing up Shepard spotted the Chief of Police frantically yelling and waving his arms in Agu's face. Rolling his eyes Shepard sent a message to Agu before looking at the security feed.

It's the Chief of Police.

Give some BS about War Games and move on.

Reviewing the footage from the cameras Shepard noticed something wrong with the supply from two of the feeds. Running several programs Shepard discovered the cameras in the Maintenance Area had been hacked and set to play on a loop. Overriding and gaining access to the correct feed Shepard paused, not one hundred percent sure what he was seeing.

"Hey Chaplain, has my ability to keep the Rookie in line while convincing an underpaid valet to shut up really shocked you that much? Over!"

"Sweeps, hold position and await further orders. Out!" Shepard snapped as he raised the shutters and transferred all surveillance footage to his HUD. "Shield, come in. Over!"

"Go ahead Chaplain. Over!"

"We have unidentified in Maintenance. Armed and Armoured, doesn't match any BDU style I'm familiar with." Shepard began before one of the unknown individuals noticed something, looked at the camera and drew a pistol. "Look hostile, just became aware of surveillance and took out a camera on them. Please advise. Over!"

"You've locked down the entire hotel â€" no way for the target to escape? Over!"

"Unleash he shatters a window and drops a few stories, no. Over!" Shepard snorted as he signalled for Agu to join him.

"Understood. Still no positive ID up hereâ€" Take your squad, investigate these unknowns. Over!"

"Understood. Out!" Shepard said. "Sweeps, make your way to Maintenance â€" Patches and I will meet you there. Unknowns, possibly hostile. Out!"

Motioning for Agu to follow Shepard made his way towards the stairwell, glaring at the still irate Chief of Police as he passed. Undoing and redoing the mag-locks as the pair passed Shepard and Agu regrouped with Matsaki and Smith.

"What's going on Sir?" Smith asked as the squad set off towards where the unknowns were.

"Unknowns who'd hidden themselves from camera feeds â€" took out the camera when they realised I'd found them." Shepard informed them as he drew and shouldered his SSG. "Shield says no one else is meant to be operating here, we're to investigate while Alpha searches for the target at the party."

"We expecting trouble?" Matsaki jokingly asked as she readied her MA-TS8g â€" Agu and Smith both shouldered their ICWs.

"Well I'm feeling cautious, so let's treat them as potential hostiles until shown otherwise." Shepard replied as a portion of his HUD lit up and alerted him that the more detailed hotel schematics had been downloaded. A quick glance at where the unknowns had been seen had Shepard break into a near sprint. "Shit, they're at the fans for the AC!"

Beta Squad were making good time when Matsaki, who was on point, rounded a corner and dove back as a hail of weapon's fire tore into the wall.

"Auto-turret!" Matsaki spat.

Taking cover Shepard activated a small camera on his SSG's barrel and peaked the gun out. Two quick bursts before the turret zeroed in and opened fire.

"Forward facing kinetic barrier." Shepard sighed. Switching to his DMR Shepard stood up and turned back to Matsaki. "Drop the shield, I'll drop the turret."

"Oh, this is gonna be fun." Matsaki groaned as she switched her ammo shaver's settings from 'shot' to 'slug'. Hunkering down and taking a steadying breath Matsaki nodded and leaned out. The MA-TS8g came with a wonderful feature that allowed it to switch between several sand grain sized slivers of ammo, much like the 'shot' of the gunpowder days, or a single 'slug' that weighed in at more than the sum total of a 'shot' round. Marines tended to affectionately refer to slugs as 'Carnage Rounds' due to the sheer damage they can do to the inadequately protected.

The shields on the auto-turret were impressive, definitely above and beyond anything available on the civilian market, but a Carnage Round proved just too taxing. The turret remained active, with sparks and smoke billowed from the shield generator, but was at the tender mercy of Shepard's DMR rounds. Two well placed rounds saw the automated sentry broken beyond repair and Beta Squad pushing up.

"Shit, shit. Are the canisters ready?" Someone up ahead was yelling, Shepard's implant translating it from the speaker's original Portuguese.

"The X0-8 culture is, but the counter-agent isn't ready for dispersal yet!" Another, originally speaking Uzbek, yelled back.

"Then realise the culture and â€"Shit, they're here!" A third began in English as Beta Squad came into view. With a snarl the woman, who given the fact she issued orders may have been in charge, opened fire with an unknown assault rifle.

The Portuguese and Uzbek speakers wore matching armour â€" off-white

plating worn over a dark bodysuit. Their helmets were white and black in colour and mostly featureless, save a pair of what looked like dark red eyes. The English speaking woman wore armour of a different configuration " thicker with several cylindrical containers attached to the chest plate. The Helmet was different as well, with thick armoured plating framing the jaw and sides of the head while the centre of the face and top of head were protected via polarized visor " much like some specialised EVA helms.

Mr. Portuguese speaker snatched up what turned out to be a shotgun of unknown design and joined the woman in opening fire.

Agu and Smith dove behind one of the large fans and took cover while Matsaki moved forward, the boom of her shotgun sending the hostiles scampering. Shepard stepped back, using the corner they'd just turned as cover while he picked his target.

"Shit, they've got energy shields!" Matsaki yelled as a Carnage Round knocked Ms. English speaker off-balance and set the woman's armour alight with piercing blue electrical energy.

"What?! Who are these guys?" Agu yelled back as he and Smith focused fire on Mr. Portuguese.

"Down now, ask questions later." Shepard ordered as his shot caught the hostile female just below the chin and, with a spectacularly bright but brief serge, dropped her shielding.

BOOM!

A Carnage Round lifted the woman and knocked her back into a wall. Matsaki, armour constantly wreathed in golden energy as she ran an integrated Shield Fortification Mod, marched forward like a woman possessed. Pumping her MA-TS8g to manually vent a portion of the heat build-up Matsaki levelled her shotgun and fired again, the hostile jerked violently and then slumped down. A steady stream of crimson leaking from the almost fist sized hole in her chest plate.

"Commander!" Mr. Portuguese yelled before a burst of ICW fire from Smith downed his shields. "Dammit release the Floo " GAGK!

The gagk less a code word or phrase and more the sound a dying man made when a DMR round impacted through one of the little red camera lenses set into his helmet's faceplate and killed him.

"Dammit! Damn it!" Mr. Uzbek hissed as Matsaki, Agu and Smith advanced on him " Shepard having decided to take a second to deliver a headshot to Mr. Portuguese and Ms. English as a precaution.

"Away from the vents! Away from the vents!" Agu ordered.

"Gah" Ahh" Fuck it! For Earth and the Hound!" Mr. Uzbek roared as he twisted a canister and released something into the air.

"Internal air supply, now!" Matsaki roared as she, Agu and Smith opened fire and the hostile.

"Crap! Secure weapons and find this 'counter-agent'!" Shepard ordered as his suit sealed itself off and began pumping in air from an internal canister. Opening a channel to Alpha Squad Shepard tried to contact Rodgers. "Alpha Squad switch to internal air now! I repeat switch to internal air now! Unknown biological or chemical weapon dispersed into air conditioning. Please respond over!... Please respond. Over!... Dammit Shield talk to me!"

"â€| Sheâ€| sheeppâ€| ShepARRRGHH!"

**XXXXX**

**So I misjudged just a littleâ€| Not quite finished with the prologue bits yet. I promise the next chapter will be it for the events on Tyran and then it'll be a quick jump to 2783 and Shepard getting the orders that send him to Eden Prime.**

**About halfway through writing this I realise I fucked up a little earlier on and forgot to give reference to the gene therapy Shepard and the other UNMC personnel undergo. My badâ€| I'll be doing another little CODEX piece on mods shortly so I'll include descriptions of the biological upgrades along with the weapon and armour mods there.**

**THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO READ THE EARLIER CHAPTERS AGES AGO AND STILL GIVES ENOUGH OF A DAMN TO READ THIS. Sorry about how long it took me, won't be that long again.**

**I'm dyslexic, so please point out any mistakes in spelling or grammar [I spell things the way they do in England and Ireland, so some things may look off to Americans]. Please leave your opinion via review or send them via PM, I'd like to know what you think. Well, I think that's everything I've gotta say so, hope you enjoyed the chapter.**

_**This is Highvalour saying bye and thanks for reading**__**.**_

End
file.